LEIPZIG, Germany: Dr Shin Young-soo from South Korea has been appointed the new Regional Director for the Western Pacific Region, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported. He will succeed Dr Shigeru Omi of Japan, who stood down at the end of January after two consecutive five-year terms. Dr Shin, who until recently held the position of Professor of Health Policy and Management at the College of Medicine at Seoul National University, has long-standing connections with the WHO from serving on its Executive Board as the representative of the Republic of Korea. He was nominated for the position of Regional Director last September and will be the first Western Pacific Regional Director to be appointed from outside WHO.

The WHO Executive Board, recently held its 124th session in Geneva, also reappointed Dr Samlee Plianbangchang for a second term as Regional Director for the South-East Asia Region. Dr Samlee has served for 16 years at WHO and worked in several key positions in the Ministry of Public Health, Royal Thai Government, including as Director of the Technical Division of the Department of Medical Services. He graduated from the University of Medical Sciences in Bangkok and holds a Master's degree in Public Health and Tropical Medicine and Doctor of Public Health degree from Tulane University.

New health initiatives for Dubai

Representatives of Dubai Healthcare City (DHCC) have announced the launch of new initiatives to address a number of issues in the Middle East’s growing health-care sector. Speaking at a press conference at Arab Health, an annual event for the health-care industry in Dubai in the UAE, senior vice-president Dr Ayesha Abdullah said that the DHCC’s programmes in 2009 will include a CME session on diabetes by the Harvard Medical School Dubai Center, as well as a variety of mobile, simulation-based courses for various levels of health-care professionals including dentists.

To support the training of regional and local health-care professionals further, the Dubai Harvard Foundation for Medical Research is offering a Science Writers and Journalists Fellowship Program in 2009 for the second consecutive year and post-doctoral research fellowships to train scientists and researchers. The foundation is also offering annual grants for two research teams under the Collaborative Research Center Programme.

Dr Ayesha added that one of DHCC’s many achievements in the last two years has been the region’s first health-care licensing examination centre, established to help develop and administer comprehensive examinations for health-care professionals. Doctors in Dubai and other countries in the Middle East usually choose to advance their specialist training credentials through the postgraduate examinations of the British Royal Colleges, such as the Membership of the Royal College of Physicians, which is hosted in Dubai, or the Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Postgraduate programmes in dentistry are offered by the DHCC’s Boston University Institute for Dental Research and Education. The only private postgraduate dental institute in the Middle East received accreditation by the UAE government last year. Its programmes include endodontics, orthodontics, pediatrics, periodontology, and prosthodontics.

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