Australian Senate passes dental care bill

CANBERRA, Australia: Millions of patients Down Under are breathing a sigh of relief, as a new scheme for subsidised dental care went through the upper house in November.

The government programme will replace the recently closed Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CDDS) and aims to provide better access to dental services for children, as well as low-income adults and pensioners.

The Labor government decided to close the CDDS in August this year, claiming that the costs had skyrocketed since it was implemented by the Howard government in the year 2007. Funding for those eligible for the scheme will expire by the end of this month, they said.

Under the CDDS, patients with chronic illnesses and complex care needs were able to claim benefits of AUS$4,250 (US$4,440) for dental treatment by a private dentist when referred by a doctor.

Starting in January 2014, the new scheme, called the Dental Benefits Amendment Bill 2012, will provide AUS$1,000 (US$1,045) over two years for families with children under the age of 17 who require basic dental treatment. Adults with concession cards, including pensioners, will be able to access the scheme later that year.

Overall, the government will stump up AUS$4 billion (US$4.18 billion) over six years for subsidised dental health care. Services in underserved areas are also expected to receive a financial injection of AUS$225 million (US$255 million) over the same period.

Japan to invest into forensics

In an effort to boost the use of measures to identify victims of crimes and natural disasters, dental students in Japan will be required to answer questions on forensic dentistry in upcoming national dentistry examinations.

The changes will be implemented by 2014 and followed by investments into training that will provide students with enhanced knowledge about how to identify bodies with the help of dental records, the country’s Ministry of Health announced.

Approximately 1,200 unidentified human bodies are found in Japan each year. In 2011, this number increased significantly owing to devastations caused by the Tsuhua earthquake and the resulting tsunami. While 10 per cent of the victims were identified by their teeth, according to figures of the Japan Dental Association, forensic dentistry experts in Japan lack experience and are too few with half a dozen experts available in some of the country’s provinces.

Bill discussed at Malaysia dental meeting

Representatives of the Malaysia Dental Association have criticised aspects of the country’s new dental bill at a joint meeting of the Malaysian and Singapore dental communities in December. President elect Dr Neoh Chee Beng said that his organisation is currently in discussions with political stakeholders in order to resolve the key issues recently put forward by the proposal.

Issued earlier this year, the bill is supposed to replace the 1973 Dental Act, which regulates the practice of dentistry in Malaysia. Among other things, it has been under scrutiny for excessive penalties and making it too easy for foreign practitioners to obtain temporary licences to practice.

Sirona Dental appoints new CEO

Global dental products provider Sirona has a new CEO. As from 20 February 2013, Jefrey T. Svinin will succeed Joost Fischer, who has held the position for 11 years. Fifty-eight-year-old Fischer will be retiring, giving up his position as both CEO and chairman of the board.

Sulzer suits copiers in China, Korea

The Swiss manufacturer announced that it has taken legal action against various dental materials enterprises. The Chinese and South Korean companies allegedly violated Sulzer’s trademark and patent rights at the recent Greater New York Dental Meeting by offering counterfeit mixing tips.

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Primary children are supposed to benefit from the new scheme. (DTI/Photo Zou Zou)

Group photo of participants of this year’s Student Clinician Program conducted by DENTSPLY Asia during the annual meeting of the International Association for Dental Research South East Asian Division in Hong Kong. (DTI/Photo courtesy of DENTSPLY Asia, Hong Kong) □ ASIA NEWS, page 1
DenTech Shanghai gains more ground in China

SHANGHAI, China: Attendance figures for DenTech China increased by another 4.5 per cent this year, UMD ShowStar, the organiser of China’s second-largest dental show, has reported. In addition to the growth in professional visitors, the exhibition saw 16 per cent higher participation by industry.

According to the latest figures, almost 600 manufacturers and dealers of dental materials and equipment took part in DenTech China 2012, almost half of which were companies from abroad, with the US and Germany having the greatest representation. The company said that approximately more than 68,000 visitors during the show held at the Shanghai World Expo Exhibition and Convention Center in late October.

The event also featured a four-day dental conference, a number of forums on specialties like implantology, and the sixth Asian Dental Lab Outsourcing Exhibition. DenTech China, which was first held in 1994, is staged annually in collaboration with the Chinese Stomatological Association and the School of Stomatology at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, among other dental institutions. Since March 2012, all operational activities have been managed by Shanghai UBM ShowStar Exhibition, a recently formed joint venture between UBM, a UK-based B2B communications provider with offices in Shanghai, Beijing and Hong Kong.

While the Green party, Labor’s coalition partner in the current minority government, applauded the new scheme as a historic step towards the proposed universal dental health care system, members of the opposition have lambasted the bill for overstretching the government’s budget. Dentists too have criticised the implementation of the scheme only in early 2014, which will leave children and adults previously covered by the CDS without proper care for over 12 months.

“Treatment of the chronically ill, for which this scheme was designed, is often complex, requiring an extended period,” commented Dr Shane Fryer, President of the Australian Dental Association recently.

“A 12-week period to complete treatment will mean that patients under the CDDS will not be able to finalise their treatment plans.”

Liberals claim that approximately one million patients have benefited from the CDDS so far. The new scheme will provide more than three million children and an additional one million adults with access to dental care, according to the government.

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