Rise in surgical exports

KARACHI, Pakistan: Exports of surgical and dental instruments from Pakistan have almost quadrupled in the last three years. Latest figures released by the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry indicate that manufacturers sold US$867.6 million worth of instruments worldwide in 2012–2015, a significant increase compared with the US$250 million generated in 2008–2009, a representative of the Surgical Instruments Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SIMAP) recently told Dental Tribune Pakistan.

He said that numbers would be even higher if certain restrictions in the banking sector did not hinder the anticipated rate of export growth. Another member of SIMAP told the newspaper that the devaluation of the rupee has negatively affected the profitability of the industry, with the cost of goods sold (COGS) at an all-time high. He said that his organisation has made continued efforts to lower the prices of its products so that the increase in COGS is not transferred to consumers.

SIMAP has also requested of the government to ease taxes for the industry.

Despite these problems, the organisation expects growth in the export of surgical goods to accelerate further in 2014–2015 with key markets located in the Middle East, the US and Europe. Numerous incentives have been provided to traders of surgical instruments and products, including marketing study missions organised by SIMAP in co-operation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

In order to boost future exports from Pakistan in the Asia Pacific region, the TDAP also sponsored the participation of a trade delegation of surgical manufacturers in the recent International Healthcare Conference and Exhibition in Malaysia.

According to Alexander, of the approximately 950 dentists entering the workforce in Australia annually, less than 60 per cent are required in order to meet the demand for dental services. She also said that her organisation had found that the number of graduates in full-time employment four months after graduation dropped from 95 per cent in 2011 to less than 84 per cent last year, increasingly forcing young dentists to work part time or take up another occupation to avoid unemployment.

A total of 14,687 dental professionals were registered with the Australian Dental Council in 2012, according to recent figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in Canberra, which ranks the country high above the ideal dentist–patient ratio of 1:3,500 recommended by the World Health Organisation. Starting salaries for dentists regularly exceed those of other high-skilled occupations, such as engineering and medicine, which makes the profession attractive not only to young people in Australia but also to dental professionals from abroad.

Last year, over 250 dentists with dental qualifications obtained outside the country received permission to work in Australia, a significant increase from only 57 who applied for assessment by the Australian Dental Council a decade ago.