Filipino dentists alarmed by sex attacks

By Daniel Zimmerman

HONG KONG: The Philippine Dental Association (PDA) has alerted its members to a series of sexual attacks on dental workers in the country. Over the last two months, female dentists and assistants in the capital Manila and neighbouring cities have been repeatedly molested and raped by what police have described as a single male suspect carrying a handgun.

At least 20 female dentists are estimated to have become victims of the attacker since August last year. The crimes were typically conducted during less busy times and in dental practices or clinics located in less populated areas. The suspect posed as a client requesting teeth cleaning or that one of his teeth be filled, according to police reports.

Police representatives told the Philippines Star newspaper that the latest evidence has led them to believe that the man could be a former member of a gang that robbed dental clinics in the past. Further details however were not disclosed.

In a message on safety released on their website, the PDA advised dentists to avoid walk-in patients, especially during the time the attacker is most likely to strike, and to install alarm systems, including buzzers or CCTV cameras. They also announced that a number of safety seminars would be held at upcoming dental conventions nationwide.

“We are coordinating with the police and other law enforcement agencies in the pursuit of the early resolution of these cases,” Dr Roberto M. Tajonera, President of the PDA, said.

“We call on all our members to remain vigilant and to secure your respective clinics for your own security and safety,” he added.

Police tape blocking entrance to a crime scene. Up to 20 female dentists have reportedly been attacked and raped in the Philippines. (DTI/Photo Brian A Jackson, UK)

Malay kids lack ortho treatment

The Malaysian Association of Orthodontists has warned that there are not enough specialists enrolled in public service to sustain the government-subsidised orthodontic treatment scheme for school-children. Waiting lists are so long that some schoolchildren may only be able to get treatment when it is too late.

Oral disease to be classified as NCD

The FDI World Dental Federation has called for oral disease to be included in the list of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) for priority action within the United Nations and World Health Organisation. The current list comprises cancer, diabetes, and respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

S’pore largest shareholder in Nobel Biocare

There’s good news for dental implant manufacturer Nobel Biocare. It has been reported that, as of 2 August, the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) increased its equity in the Swiss company from 5.29% to 5.4%. Through this investment, the state fund has become the largest shareholder in Nobel Biocare ahead of the US investment managing firm Artio Global Management.

Founded in 1981, GIC manages Singapore’s foreign assets of estimated US$550 million worldwide. The company made its first investment in Nobel Biocare in July this year.

Nobel Biocare did not comment on the transaction. Most market analysts in Europe reacted positively to the announcement.

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Violence against women in the Philippines, including rape, has increased in recent years, with over 960 cases in 2009 reported by the Philippine Commission on Women (formerly the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women). Like most countries in South-East Asia, the country has a large number of female dentists.

Police tape blocking entrance to a crime scene. Up to 20 female dentists have reportedly been attacked and raped in the Philippines. (DTI/Photo Brian A Jackson, UK)