Virgin starts venture in healthcare and dentistry

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LONDON: Unstoppable entrepreneur Richard Branson is moving into healthcare and dentistry, it has been announced. His Virgin Group has established a new business called Virgin Healthcare and plans to open centres with general practitioners (GPs) of the National Health Service and other health-care professionals in the UK, including dental teams. The company said the move followed an extensive two-year consultation with key stakeholders from across primary care.

The first Virgin Healthcare centre is expected to open later in 2008; five more centres will follow by the end of 2009. The company plans to work with existing GP practices in their current structures and under their existing contracts with Patient Cooperation Treaties. It also plans to add other healthcare services in consultation with local providers to meet local needs. These could include dentistry, diagnostics, screening, and a pharmacy as well as a range of conventional and complementary therapies.

The company is currently advertising for dental staff on its website: www.virginhealthcare.net

Dental care is one of the services we would seek to provide in a Virgin healthcare centre alongside the GP practice,” a spokeswoman for Virgin said. “This is an all-under-one-roof concept bringing together primary care services. Dentistry would be one of the private offerings in our range of ancillary services which could also include physiotherapy and podiatry.”

The man heading up the venture is Mark Adams, who was previously chief executive of the private healthcare provider Nethcare UK and before that was with Denplan. He said Virgin was moving into healthcare because it felt it could make a real difference. “Virgin’s expertise in customer service, technological know-how, communications skills and resources can combine with the expertise of primary healthcare clinicians to make that difference in the healthcare sector,” he continued. Mr Adams confirmed healthcare professionals working with the company would retain their independent contractor status.

Use of CAD/CAM dental systems projected to growth

From news reports

TORONTO: The market for newly purchased dental computer-aided design and CAD/CAM systems in the US, Europe and Japan surpassed US$252 million in 2007. It will expand in response to patient and dentist demand for all-ceramic CAD/CAM-produced restorations, which are growing at the expense of metal-based restorations, according to a new report by the Millennium Research Group in Toronto, Canada. Improved technology will also foster the market’s growth by enabling manufacturers to raise prices in some segments of the market.

Dental labs are increasingly outsourcing crown and bridge computer-aided manufacturing production to milling centres. Accordingly, in the US, unit growth for scanners used in the outsourcing process will reach nearly 20% annually over the next five years. In Europe, this annual unit growth will exceed 20%. The more labs that can offer CAD/CAM restorations, the more demand for a product that can make the dental lab more efficient in producing a higher-quality restoration. Dental labs are also finding CAD/CAM restorations are more cost-effective than some existing services.

Cefla Dental Group takes over Chinese Suzhou Victor Medical Equipment

OMOLA: The Italian Cefla Dental Group has announced the acquisition of Victor Medical Equipment, a Chinese-Taiwanese joint-venture specialised in the production of high-quality dental units like the AM208 and AM8050. According to company officials, the acquisition will strengthen Cefla’s local presence in China, and to its strategic expansion into potential growth markets, products and technologies. There will be significant investments in the Eastern China-based production site in Suzhou, and the development of a product range based on the existing Victor brand that will be specifically designed to respond to the needs of dentists in the area whose choice of equipment is based on long-term reliability, quality materials and outstanding value for money, the company says.

Cefla has consistently increased its dealings within the Chinese market through the Anhui Suzhou Victor Company Ltd in 1992, and it has been making significant investments there. The company has been a supplier to the Chinese market for the last 30 years, and is a recognised supplier of advanced dental equipment to the country’s major hospitals. “This recent acquisition brings us much closer to our Chinese customers,” states Eros Nammi, Managing Director of the Cefla Dental Group.

The Cefla Cooperative, which consists of four business divisions, increased its consolidated revenues by 14.2% to US$377 million in 2006 despite a rather difficult external market environment. The company also closed the fiscal year 2006 with a consolidated net profit of 13.5 million Euro, up by 15% compared to 2005 results. Cefla considers themselves a global player in the dental market. They supply integrated treatment centres for dental surgeries and have production sites in Germany, Italy, France, China and Taiwan, with offices in Italy, Europe and the United States. Following the launch of the company’s third brand for high-tech imaging technology MyRay in 2007, Suzhou Victor Medical Equipment will become the fourth name in Cefla’s brand portfolio.