Universal health care scheme launched in Indonesia

Implementation overshadowed by inequalities in country’s health care system

JAKARTA, Indonesia: Aiming to improve access to health care services for millions of people, the government in Indonesia rolled out the first stage of its universal health care coverage scheme in January. The new insurance, called Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional, replaces all previous national and local health care programmes and is intended to provide initial coverage for people who were members of the previous public health insurance for the poor or who have a monthly income of less than 257,000 rupiah (US$24).

With the first phase implemented this year, slightly over 120 million or approximately half of the country’s population will be automatically covered by the new scheme. Coverage for all 240 million Indonesians is anticipated by 2019.

In addition to higher health care spending this year, the government has announced plans to increase the number of health care workers and make improvements to the country’s deficient health infrastructure, such as the construction of 156 new state-run hospitals.

According to World Bank estimates, the scheme will cost Indonesia up to US$16 billion each year once fully implemented. The country currently only spends an estimated US$800 million in this sector, which has raised concerns among health care professionals about the government’s ability to pay out premiums to those health care workers enrolled in the new programme.

“Hospitals are afraid they will lose money by not being reimbursed by the past, while health workers are afraid they will make mistakes. As a result, quality of treatment has been compromised,” a neurosurgeon recently promised, a neurosurgeon recently stated.

In contrast to the government’s plans, many dentists and other health care professionals are concerned about the quality of care and the financial implications of the scheme.

The Centre for Advanced Professional Practices has announced that its next CAD/CAM and Digital Dentistry International Congress will be held in Singapore in 2015. Their last edition, which took place in October, was attended by 570 dental professionals visiting the two-day event.

Meeting postponed

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Children’s teeth examined

Four years after the fall-out from the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan, the Fukushima Prefecture Dental Association will be conducting a large-scale examination on the teeth of children. Testing for presence of the radioactive isotope strontium-90, the project is going to commence in April.

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Rise in female dentists

The number of dentists in Australia has increased, as well as the number of women working in the field in particular. Today, more than a third of dentists registered in the country are female, according to a recently published employment report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in Canberra.

A total of 19,462 dental practitioners were registered by the Dental Board of Australia in 2012, of whom 14,687 (75.5 per cent) were dentists. The report also showed that 1,600 (8.3 per cent) worked as dental hygienists, 1,178 (6.6 per cent) as dental therapists, 1,161 (6.3 per cent) as dental prosthetists and 738 (3.8 per cent) as oral health therapists.

Dentist from Pakistan passes RCSEd exam

The first dental implant surgeon in Pakistan to do so, Dr. Irfan Qureshi has received a Diploma in Implant Dentistry from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) in the UK. He passed the course, which requires candidates to pass written and oral exams, as well as defend their own submitted clinical cases, recently with top marks in the respective test categories. Held annually over the course of three days in the Scottish capital, the RCSEd diploma recognises clinical experience and excellence in the field of dental implantology.

Qureshi is one of the main advocates for the specialty in his country. Besides operating a dental practice specialised in dental implant surgery in Karachi, he lectures internationally and is a diplomate of the International Congress of Oral Implantologists. The founder and President of the Federation of Implant Dentistry Pakistan, he also helped organise the first international congress for dental implantology in Pakistan in January 2012.
German professor replaces Samaranayake as dean of HK dental school

Prof. Thomas Flemmig to assume top position in July

Daniel Zimmermann
DIT

HONG KONG: The University of Hong Kong (HKU) has announced the appointment of Prof. Thomas Flemmig from the University of Washington School of Dentistry in the USA as the new dean of its dental faculty. The German expert in periodontics will assume his new position by the middle of the year and replaces Prof. Lakshman Samarayanayake, who moved on to head the University of Queensland School of Dentistry in Australia at the beginning of the year.

Flemmig’s appointment ends a worldwide search by HKU for a new faculty dean that started in late 2012. According to university officials, Prof. Edward C.M. Lo, Chair of Dental Public Health, is serving as interim dean until Flemmig assumes his new position in July.

Prior to his tenure in the USA, Flemmig held academic positions in several dental schools in Germany, including those of Würzburg and Münster. In addition, he has maintained an intramural practice since 1990. Speaking to Dental Tribune Asia Pacific in January, he stated that he was unwilling to comment on his appointment for the moment.

HKU officials thanked Samarayanayake, who headed the dental faculty from 2004, and welcomed Flemmig, remarking that he is a “highly accomplished scholar of international standing and a renowned periodontist.”

“He possesses rich experience in working with government agencies and professional organisations. With this combination of academic achievements, management experience and communication skills, we have high hopes that the faculty will continue to excel in research, education and dental care under his leadership,” HKU Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Lap-Chye Tsui commented.

Flemmig is the faculty’s seventh dean since its inauguration in 1982. He is also the first German to assume the prestigious position, which has been held by dental professionals from Great Britain and Sri Lanka, among others. According to the university, his contract with the Faculty of Dentistry will be limited to a period of five years.

Hong Kong’s only institution for higher dental education, the school currently provides six-year undergraduate training in dental specialties such as oral and maxillofacial surgery and paediatric dentistry. According to university figures, 110 students were enrolled in the Faculty at the end of 2015, which has an intake of 50 students per year.

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An overview of minimally invasive periodontal surgery using Er,Cr:YSGG laser technology

Dr. Rana A. Falakli

01:00 PM (EST)

This webinar course is a clinical overview of the use of the Er,Cr:YSGG laser in the management and treatment of Advanced Chronic Periodontitis and Aggressive Periodontitis. Traditional methods to treat such cases usually involve extensive periodontal surgery, along with the use of regenerative bone substitutes to manage the disease process, at the same time resulting in prolonged side effects of sensitivity, pain and recession, as well as the inevitable need for systemic antibiotics. This lecture will take you through an overview of aetiology and risk factors associated with periodontal disease, provide you with an overview of available and current treatment modalities, and demonstrate a minimally invasive technique using Er,Cr:YSGG lasers to achieve favourable outcomes with minimal adverse side effects.

Learning outcomes:
• Gain a better understanding of how lasers work on soft tissues and bone.
• Gain an understanding of the use of Er,Cr:YSGG laser in periodontology for the management of periodontitis.
• Gain an understanding of the mechanisms through which the Er,Cr:YSGG laser can be effective in the periodontal pocket.
• Gain an understanding of the criteria needed for periodontal regeneration, and how the Er,Cr:YSGG laser can help to achieve this goal.

Be able to describe laser periodontal treatment to their patients.
North Korea opens new dental centre

PYONGYANG, DPRK/TOKYO, Japan: Amid political tensions on the Korean Peninsula, the government of Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) has recently opened a new advanced dental clinic in the eastern part of the capital Pyongyang. Located in the Taedonggang district, the Ryugyong Dental Hospital was constructed in record time and has the capacity to treat 300 people a day, according to official reports.

In a video released by the DPRK news channel in Tokyo in Japan, a clinic employee stated that the infrastructure of the centre is comparable to Western standards and offers a dental laboratory and paediatric dentistry department. It also seems to be equipped with dental equipment from leading dental manufacturers from Europe, which includes digital imaging systems, apex locators and caries detection technology.

Similar to other matters regarding the country, little is known about the size and quality of North Korea’s oral health care system. Estimates about the country’s dental work-force are only available from the WHO, which estimates that the country employs slightly more than 8,000 dentists, or charity organisations such as Samaritan’s Purse in the US, which supports the isolated country with a number of dental care-related projects. Speaking to Dental Tribune Asia Pacific in 2012, its board member Dr Melvin Cheatham said that there is reason to believe that dental care, which is provided solely by the North Korean government, is lacking in labour and proper training. He admitted, however, there have been initiatives under the new regime to improve dental services in the recent past, particularly in urban areas like Pyongyang.

Professional organisations and health experts have warned that these amounts might be too low for guaranteeing long-term quality care. They also pointed out the problem of unequal distribution or simply the lack of health care service providers and facilities throughout the country. Millions of people in the central and eastern parts of the island state, for example, are not able to see a doctor regularly.

According to figures from the World Health Organization, the country also has a shortage of about 4,000 dentists. In order to receive even basic treatment, millions of people have to rely on tukang gigi, a group of estimated 75,000 unregistered street dentists, who offer low-cost dental procedures, such as extractions and fillings, without approval from health authorities.

Owing to the lack of manpower, the prevalence of dental diseases remains high in Indonesia, with 70 per cent of adults suffering from caries and other oral lesions.

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