Patients in Malaysia go on record

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Malaysia Healthcare, a medical tourism facilitator in Malaysia, is offering a medical record storage device to foreign medical tourists and domestic patients who wish to go abroad for treatment. The individual Personal Health Electronic Record (iPHER) USB device, which is produced by a US company based in Florida, is able to carry basic patient data, such as blood type, allergies and dental records. It allows medical professionals to access a patient’s medical history quickly.

Physicians and dentists in Malaysia and most Asian countries are currently not required to store their patient’s medical data in digital format. Malaysia Healthcare is the first provider to offer such a service to patients in places without Internet connectivity, he added.

Digital storage of medical records is increasingly becoming big business in the health care sector as broadband Internet becomes available in more parts of the world. Computing companies like Microsoft and Google already offer web-based platforms that can store and exchange medical records and data. Data protection specialists, however, have warned against the massive outsourcing of medical record transcription and storage, which has the potential to violate patient–physician confidentiality by allowing unauthorised persons access to critical patient data.

Japanese students lack interest in private dental schools

TOKYO, Japan: Enrolment in private dental schools in Japan has decreased again during spring term, a survey by the Japanese Association of Private Dental Schools has found. Figures released by the organisation last month show that almost 70 per cent of the schools missed their intake quota. The total number of students who wrote entrance examinations for private dental colleges was 4,318, a sharp fall from over 10,000 in 2006.

The institution that suffered most from the lack of new students was Ohu University in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, which only had 32 new students enrolled for a quota of 96, according to the survey. Matsumoto Dental University in Matsumoto, Nagano Prefecture, had 55 students enrolled compared with its quota of 80, while the School of Dentistry at the Health Sciences University of Hokkaido in Tobeitsuchu, Hokkaido, enrolled only half of its 96-student quota.

Private dental schools in Japan have been struggling to attract a sufficient number of students in recent years because the dental workforce in the country has increased significantly in the last 20 years, despite stable total dental care costs. In 2006, Japan had 96,000 dentists compared with only 71,000 in 1999, according to figures from the Ministry of International Affairs and Commerce.

Dental experts said the drop in the number of private dental institution applicants suggests that fewer young people have a positive image of dentistry as a lucrative and desirable profession. They pointed out that if the trend continues, private dental colleges and schools will not be able to select students with sufficient academic quality.
AAAD elects Japanese dentist for president

Claudia Salwiczek
DTI

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Dr Hisashi Hisamitsu from Japan was recently appointed President of the Asian Academy of Aesthetic Dentistry (AAAD). The 62-year-old dentist from Kawasaki City succeeds Dr Sim Tang Eng from Malaysia, who has served as President for the last two years. Dr Hisamitsu is currently Chairman of the Department of Clinical Cardiology and Endodontology at Showa University School of Dentistry in Japan.

The presidency take-over took place at the AAAD meeting in Kuala Lumpur in May. In addition, Dr Wang Guang Hu from China has been appointed President-Elect. He will be elected President at the next AAAD meeting, which will be held in 2012 in Japan. The AAAD General Assembly also appointed Dr Takashi Nakamura from Japan as General Secretary.

AAAD meetings take place every two years. This year’s gathering, with the theme High Definition Aesthetic Dentistry, drew 549 delegates to Kuala Lumpur. It was organised jointly with the Malaysian Association of Aesthetic Dentistry and offered well-known speakers in the field including Drs Mauro Fradeani (Italy), Didier Dietschi (Switzerland), and Bruce Matis and Rhys Spoor (USA), who also conducted two hands-on workshops at the University of Malaysia.

The AAAD was originally founded in 1990 at the Prince Philip Dental Hospital in Hong Kong. Since then, the Academy has grown annually and the number of member countries has increased from three to twelve, including China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. It is also a founding member of International Federation of Aesthetic Dentistry.

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HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Students at the Hwa Chong Institution in Singapore are currently investigating the adhesive properties of barnacles for use in dentistry. Their research, which received a Gold Award at this year’s Singapore Science and Engineering Fair, may offer a new means of attaching dental braces or cementing cavities in teeth.

Barnacles are marine invertebrates that live in shallow or tidal waters. They attach themselves permanently to hard substrate like rocks or ships with the help of a protein-based adhesive, called barnacle cement. Shipping companies spend millions every year to remove massive accumulations of these animals, which can slow down ships and increase fuel consumption.

Worldwide, more than 1,220 barnacle species have been identified. The students explored biocompatibility, speed of polymerisation and acid resistance in the cement secreted by a barnacle species called *Amphibalanus amphitrite*. They found that the cement is water insoluble and has strong mechanical properties, but is safe for humans to use in the mouth. The researchers observed, however, that the cement lacks resistance to long-term exposure to strongly acidic conditions. Its adhesiveness was compromised by acidic substances, such as orange juice and soda, they said.

The team, which is supported by the National University of Singapore, is now working with a new experimental design that can better simulate oral conditions in humans. If successful, the outcome could also be beneficial for other medical applications, such as joining bones in surgery.