 Overseas dental work troubles Australia

Fourty per cent made offshore—Professionals demand legislative change

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: Almost every second dental patient in Australia is receiving dental work that is made abroad. Dentists in the country are now demanding new legislation to make it mandatory for the profession to let patients know where their crowns or bridges are being produced. Momentarily, only dental prosthesis made in Australia are regulated by the government but those standards do not apply to imported dental work.

Dental laboratories in Thailand, India or China have gained a huge share out of the regional dental prosthesys market. Companies like Moderna Dental Laboratory, which maintains a large facility with 5,000 technicians in Shenzhen near the China-Hong Kong border, are increasingly serving customers in Australia making it harder for local labs to compete.

Job prospects for dental technicnicians have been steady recently but could decline by 50 per cent over the next 10 years, a government report has found.

Dental work made in countries like Thailand costs significantly less than in Australia due to cheap labour and materials. Dental work made in countries like Thailand costs significantly less than in Australia due to cheap labour and materials.

More and more dentists in Australia eye for foreign made dental work. (DTI/Photo Kacso Sandor)

“This loss of work is slowly destroying the dental laboratory industry, in turn making the remaining key players work harder to retain the business they have and increasing costs further as they struggle to find quality staff for less pay,” says Dr Paul McKay, a dentist from Brisbane specialised on dental implant surgery.

He estimates that dental laboratories near the city already lost 40 per cent of their market share to off-shore labs, a number similar to those reported for the whole country.

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Currently, the examination of teeth in medico-legal cases is not standard procedure in India. Established in 2006, the Department led by IAFO secretary Dr Ashith B. Acharya has lobbied for the state’s approval for more than two years. Forensic experts have hailed the decision as another step in the recognition of the specialty by the medical profession, police and judiciary.

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Hygiene and professionalism

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Malaysia teams with global dental organisation to help kids

Daniel Zimmermann

HONG KONG/LEIPZIG, Germany: The National University of Malaysia’s Faculty of Dentistry is taking on the oral health of children. At the International Conference of the Academy of Preventive Dentistry (AAPD) in Kuala Lumpur in November, the faculty announced that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Global Child Dental Fund, a UK-based international oral health organisation. The agreement is supposed to promote dental research and programmes that could affect disadvantaged children in Malaysia and elsewhere.

The Global Child Dental Fund, led by England’s former Chief Dental Officer and Dentistry Prof. Raman Bedi, was founded in 2006 to support governments worldwide on improving children’s oral health. The organisation maintains programmes in over fourteen countries, including Australia, China and the Philippines. It is sponsored by dental heavyweights Colgate-Palmolive and Henry Schein.

Prof. Bedi, who is based at King’s College in London, told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific that under the agreement a Malaysian national child dental health taskforce led by AAPD past president Prof. Rahimah Abdul Kadir, Malaysia, will be established to champion the dental needs of disadvantaged children and to implement and coordinate country-wide activities. It also aims to grow local and regional capacity for effective caries management, as well as support new dental leadership programmes in the country.

“I am delighted that such a prestigious university as the National University of Malaysia will be working with us and that Prof. Kadir will be leading this work,” Prof. Bedi said. “Only transformational dental leadership will change the rising levels of early childhood caries and for this we need effective leaders within the dental profession.”

According to figures from the Ministry of Health in Malaysia, only 15 percent of children below the age of five are caries-free.

Malaysia: Temperatures are often believed to use heavy metals including nickel, cadmium or lead which have toxic potential and can accelerate the development of non-communicable diseases such as allergies or cancer. McKay claims that patients should be aware that they might receive a lower quality product from abroad before they undergo dental treatment at home.

“There is not necessarily a lack of ethics in Australia regarding this matter, dentists have the right to choose where they have their dental work constructed,” he says. “However, they should be required to inform the patient that their dental work is being constructed offshore.”

The Therapeutic Goods Administration which oversees medical drugs and devices did not comment on the matter before this edition went to print.

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Dental Tribune International
Hohenistrasse 20, 04229, Leipzig, Germany
Tel.: +49 341 48474-500 · Fax: +49 341 48474-173
Internet: www.dental-tribune.com · E-mail: info@dental-tribune.com

Regional Offices

Asia Pacific
116 West 23rd Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10011, USA
Tel.: +1 212 244 7181 · Fax: +1 212 224 7185

The Americas
Dental Tribune America, LLC
800 E. Independence Blvd., Suite 115, Charlotte, NC 28202, USA
Tel.: +1 704 584 1646 · Fax: +1 704 584 1647

Europe
Dental Tribune Europe, GmbH
Bonnallee 1, 40213, Düsseldorf, Germany
Tel.: +49 211 93 56 0 · Fax: +49 211 93 56 140

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