Dentists take part in military-led aid mission to Asia Pacific

International humanitarian campaign aims to provide treatment for more than 20,000 people

WASHINGTON, DC & SAN DIEGO, CA, USA: In one of the worst natural disasters in recent times, the Boxing Day tsunami killed more than 200,000 people in South-East Asia. Following the catastrophe, humanitarian missions organised by the Pacific Partnership have been conducted in the region each year since 2006. Recently, the first support troops including military dental providers were deployed from around the world for this year's campaign.

According to Mission Commander US Navy Captain James Morgan, who spoke to reporters before embarking, the joint exercise will see repeated visits to regions and islands in Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia and Vietnam during the next two months. Up to 100 dental providers will be taking part in the mission, which is budgeted at US$20 million and expected to resume in early August.

“While at a host nation, I expect we'll see anywhere from 60 to 100 patients daily, and sometimes, patients need more than one procedure performed,” commented William Robinson, a US Air Force major and dental provider from San Antonio. Besides dental services like teeth cleaning and extraction, military personal will also provide other medical and engineering aid, as well as training to local medical professionals.

The last mission in 2011 provided treatment to more than 21,000 patients. Approximately 1,000 professionals, both military members and civilians, are expected to join the mission, which, according to Captain Morgan, is supported by non-governmental organisations such as the San Diego Pre-Dental Society and intended to enhance international cooperation, as well as regional capability for future emergencies. Several countries, including France, Singapore and South Korea, are participating for the first time, he said. Besides the US, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Australia have contributed resources regularly since the beginning.

The Partnership is hosted by the US Navy, which also provides major transportation and logistic support through the USNS Mercy, one of its two currently operating hospital ships. According to Captain Morgan, it will offer capacity for between 500 to 150 surgeries per day offshore and on land.

With almost 200 ships and more than 500,000 troops in the region, the US Pacific Fleet is currently the largest naval military power in the Asia Pacific region. During a visit to the region in November last year, US president Barack Obama announced intentions to strengthen US-AP relations to promote stability in the region, of which the Partnership is considered an essential part.

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Elexxion signs new distributor for Asian markets

HONG KONG/RADOLFZELL, Germany: Dental laser specialist elexxion has reported that it has signed a new distribution agreement with Global Dental Supplies in Hong Kong. The five-year contract will give the dental distributor the exclusive rights to distribute elexxion’s laser technology for use in dentistry in several Asian countries.

Currently, the German company sells its products through its subsidiaries and dealers in selected markets, such as India and Japan. The distribution rights for Hong Kong and Macau were previously held by Healthcare Dental, which did not renew its contract with elexxion after 2009, company officials said.

Besides elexxion dental lasers, Global Dental Supplies also distributes products from the German implant company BEGO, Sunstar, Bisco and GC, among others.

“With Global Dental Supplies we have a strong partner that gives us the opportunity to systematically expand our sales and marketing activities in Asia,” commented elexxion CEO Per Liljenqvist.

He said that his company could benefit from the agreement in terms of product registration and exhausting new distribution channels in the region.

The latest elexxion product offering includes the delos 3.0, a novel Er:YAG/diode laser combination indicated for a wide range of dental applications.

In addition, the company distributes the pico mobile diode laser and duros, an Er:YAG dental laser device claimed to facilitate efficient hard-tissue surgical preparation and bone ablation tasks.

Regulation in Malaysia gets revamped

PUTRAJAYA & KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia: Medical device regulations are being stepped up in Malaysia with the upcoming launch of a new governmental agency that will require local manufacturers and importers to have their products officially registered before they enter the market.

The Medical Devices Authority, which will replace the current Medical Device Control Division, will operate under the authority of the Ministry of Health and be led by the country’s Director-General of Health.

As part of the 2011 Medical Device Act ratified by the Malaysian parliament late last year, the regulatory changes are intended to protect domestic businesses from patent infringement and patients from harmful devices.

From November, all products will be classified into four risk categories, ranging from low to high. Ministry of Health officials commented. They said that non-compliant companies will be fined a maximum of RM200,000 (US$63,600).

To date, the registration of medical devices in Malaysia has been voluntary and imports have been largely uncontrolled.

Speaking to Dental Tribune Asia Pacific, Ultradent’s General Manager for Asia Pacific, Nicolas Sondaz, said that no official information had yet been communicated by the ministry with regard to dental devices.

His company, which sells restorative materials and tooth-whitening kits, among other products, opened its Asian headquarters last year in Kuala Lumpur.

“The process of product registration has been quite slow in Malaysia,” he said. “We hope that the Ministry of Health will consider the size of the market and place the fee for each product registration accordingly.”

View of Hong Kong harbour.