

A photograph of two surgeons in an operating room, wearing blue scrubs, masks, and hairnets. They are focused on a surgical procedure. The lighting is bright and clinical. The text is overlaid on the image.

Health for all —
Taiwan can help



CONTENTS

ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL HEALTH	03
READY TO SHARE INTERVIEW BY OSCAR CHUNG	04
DOCTORS IN TRAINING Reprinted from March / April 2018 issue of Taiwan Review BY KELLY HER	06
HEALTHY PROGRESS Reprinted from January / February 2018 issue of Taiwan Review BY PAT GAO	12
SECOND CHANCE BY MEG CHANG	16
BEYOND BORDERS	18



Cover image: Surgeons from Chang Gung Memorial Hospital perform an operation arranged by Taipei City-based Noordhoff Craniofacial Foundation in Shenzhen, mainland China.

(Courtesy of NCF)

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Achieving Universal Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) constitution states that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.” In Taiwan, this principle is realized through the National Health Insurance (NHI) program, a global benchmark in universal medical care. Taiwan’s expertise in developing this system warrants sharing with the international community through the World Health Assembly (WHA)—the decision-making body of the WHO.

Launched in 1995, the NHI is a compulsory single-payer social insurance plan covering virtually every citizen and foreign resident. It offers convenient access to inpatient and outpatient services, dental care, prescription medications and traditional Chinese treatments at affordable prices. Users are free to choose doctors and hospitals from over 25,000 contracted facilities, enjoy short wait times and seek specialty care without referral.

Social justice is the pillar on which the NHI has been built. Premiums come from the government, employers and employees, with the fee set as a proportion of salary, currently 4.69 percent. Workers pay 30 percent, employers 60 percent and the government the remaining 10 percent. There is also a 1.91 percent levy on supplementary earnings like bonuses and

stock dividends to ensure contributions reflect a user’s full income. For households below the poverty line, the premium is fully subsidized.

The NHI has secured consistent improvements in public health while keeping costs in check. Since its establishment, average life expectancy has risen from 74.5 to 80.2 years, while health disparities between socioeconomic groups as well as urban and rural areas have narrowed. In addition, health care expenditure totaled just 5.9 percent of gross domestic product in 2016, significantly lower than the average of 9 percent for that year among Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW).

This cost-effectiveness results from minimized administrative spending. Related expenses accounted for a mere 0.9 percent of total outlays in 2017, the lowest ratio in the world, the MOHW said.

Administrative efficiency, as well as oversight of service utilization and quality, is achieved through a powerful centralized information technology system. Every user carries a unique NHI card that tracks personal data including diagnoses, drug allergies and prescriptions, major illnesses and palliative care directives. This strengthens service delivery, promotes medical R&D and provides a potent tool to halt the spread of epidemics. In case of emergency situations such as the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS,

authorities can request real-time data updates, enabling rapid identification of potential patients.

The NHI has earned widespread acclaim at home and abroad. In an MOHW survey conducted last year, 85 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the program. And every year the ministry welcomes scores of foreign delegations eager to learn about the Taiwan model, including more than 50 groups in 2017 alone.

In line with the universal right to health on which the program was founded, the government has enacted several amendments in recent years to expand coverage. The second-generation NHI, unveiled in 2013 to ensure the system’s financial stability, enrolled Taiwan’s 60,000 prison inmates. And since December 2017, babies born to foreign residents—previously eligible to join at six months old—have been included at birth.

As evinced by the NHI, Taiwan has fully embraced the WHO’s founding principle and stands as definitive proof that health for all is an achievable goal. Taiwan would relish the opportunity to attend the 71st WHA May 21-26 in Geneva so it can share its extensive expertise in the realization of this objective with the international community. ■

Ready to Share

Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) discusses the National Health Insurance (NHI) program as well as Taiwan's desire to participate in the 71st World Health Assembly (WHA)—the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO)—May 21-26 in Geneva.



Taiwan Review: What are the ideals underpinning the NHI and why is the program worth sharing with the international community?

Chen Shih-chung: The NHI is based on the principle of leaving no one behind. All citizens and foreign residents are enrolled. It provides access to a wide range of services spanning Western and traditional Chinese medicine as well as dental care. It also ensures fairness by setting premiums as a proportion of a person's income.

Through this system, the NHI Administration under the Ministry of Health and Welfare [MOHW] is the single payer for all medical services. This arrangement ensures high levels of efficiency by significantly reducing administrative spending. Last year, these expenses accounted for 0.9 percent of the program's total outlays, the lowest proportion in the world.

The NHI has led to continuous improvements in public health, with average life expectancy in Taiwan rising from 74.5 to 80.2 years since its launch. We have also regularly enacted amendments to expand coverage. Most recently, in December 2017, we added babies born in Taiwan to foreign residents [previously eligible for inclusion at six months old] from birth. This demonstrates the nation's respect for health care as a fundamental human right.

TR: How has the NHI strengthened public health and preventative medicine in Taiwan?

Chen: Among numerous examples, the program helps stem the spread of HIV. Related medications are fully subsidized through the government's general budget in the first two years following diagnosis and subsequently under the NHI.

And in January 2017, the system began offering newly developed antiviral medications for hepatitis C, since the illness is a major cause of liver cancer. This is money well spent. Dealing with the disease now will save a lot in the long term by preventing more serious health conditions.

TR: Given Taiwan's aging population, what measures has the government taken to ensure the NHI's long-term financial viability?

Chen: The biggest change came in 2013 when we boosted revenue by introducing a new charge on supplementary income such as bonuses and stock earnings. Further reforms will be launched in the next three to four years to enhance efficiency, secure the system's financial health and promote equity in premium contributions. While no national health insurance program is perfect, Taiwan's model has been a resounding success and can serve as a reference for other nations.

TR: What other health care achievements does Taiwan have to share with the world?

Chen: Taiwan has realized exceptional levels of efficiency and convenience in medical care through the use of world-leading information technology solutions. Since 2015, the vast majority of hospitals and clinics have been connected to a centralized cloud-based system that allows physicians to quickly and easily locate patients' medical records. This offers numerous advantages, such as enabling health care providers to

avoid prescribing double doses of drugs. In January 2018, the system was further upgraded into a cutting-edge file-sharing platform for diagnostic images such as CT scans.

Taiwan has also accumulated considerable expertise in epidemic prevention. In recent years, our advanced border control infrastructure has effectively stemmed the spread of illnesses like bird flu and dengue fever. Taiwan is also quick to report potential issues and research results to the WHO, as in the most recent H7N9 case in February last year.

TR: How important is it for Taiwan to take part in the WHA?

Chen: Taiwan needs to participate because face-to-face interactions build mutual trust and forge partnerships—key facets in strengthening the global disease control network. Through technical meetings at the WHA, Taiwan can learn from other countries and give back by sharing its health care expertise. ■

—interview by Oscar Chung

01. Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung
02. Taiwan's centralized cloud-based medical records system allows health care providers to quickly locate patient data and diagnostic images.
03. The National Health Insurance program offers virtually every citizen and foreign resident access to a wide range of services spanning Western and traditional Chinese medicine as well as dental care.

01 & 03. Photos by Huang Chung-hsin
02. Photo by Jimmy Lin



Doctors in Training

A government-funded scholarship is fostering the next generation of medical professionals from Republic of China (Taiwan) diplomatic allies.

BY KELLY HER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF
I-SHOU UNIVERSITY

In June 2017, 32 international students, sporting flowing black robes and beaming smiles, received their medical degrees during a first-of-its-kind graduation ceremony at I-Shou University (ISU) in southern Taiwan's Kaohsiung City. Hailing from 12 countries spanning Africa, the Caribbean, Central America and the Pacific, the young people comprised the inaugural class under a government initiative aimed at strengthening health care expertise and service delivery in Republic of China (Taiwan) diplomatic allies.

Among the recipients was David Alfred from the Marshall Islands. "The experience of studying at ISU was fantastic," said the 26-year-old, who like his classmates has since returned home to complete a hospital internship. "The university's well-developed curriculum offered a great balance between classroom and clinical instruction."

After finishing his one-year internship at Majuro Hospital, the primary tertiary care center in the Marshall Islands, Alfred said he wants to help treat patients with complications from diabetes, a major public health concern in the Pacific island nation. "Many sufferers end up being admitted to the hospital with bone fractures, eye damage, heart disease and other problems," he said. "There's a serious lack of doctors to deal with these issues, so I want to become a surgeon and help alleviate this shortage."

Free Med School

Launched in 2013, the bachelor's degree in medicine scholarship for students from diplomatic allies is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and overseen by Taipei City-based International



01. Former Minister of Foreign Affairs David Tawei Lee, front, sixth right, and other dignitaries pose with the 32 students in the inaugural graduating class of a government-funded medical school scholarship for nationals from Republic of China (Taiwan) diplomatic allies in June 2017 at I-Shou University in southern Taiwan's Kaohsiung City.

02. Enrollees in the School of Medicine for International Students who have finished the second year of the program take their medical oaths before beginning the clinical clerkship portion of their degree.

03. SMIS operates under the university's College of Medicine.



03. Photo by Huang Chung-hsin

Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF), the country's foremost foreign aid organization. Participants attend the ISU School of Medicine for International Students (SMIS), a division of the university's College of Medicine established specifically for the initiative.

Program applicants must have a bachelor's degree and sit written exams and interviews. If successful, they receive full scholarships for the duration of their studies, including airfare, accommodation, insurance, textbooks, tuition and a monthly allowance of NT\$15,000 (US\$500). To date, 180 people have been accepted into the program.

According to Chen Yun-ju (陳韻如), an associate chair of SMIS, the school is committed to educating students on the latest medical practices, principles and technologies so

they can offer cutting-edge patient-centered care. Enrollees also receive training in leadership and management to foster their ability to shape public health policymaking at home and abroad, she said. "It's our hope they can contribute to overseas humanitarian aid and global health care development."

The SMIS curriculum is divided into two stages. For their first two years, students take general education and medical science courses at ISU in fields ranging from genetics and human morphology to microbiology and physician-patient communications. All of the lessons are conducted in English, with the exception of mandatory Mandarin language classes. In the final two years, students complete clinical clerkships through participating in rounds and outpatient care





at one of two nearby health care facilities, E-Da Hospital and E-Da Cancer Hospital. Both institutions, along with ISU, are affiliated with Kaohsiung-based conglomerate E United Group.

Liang Cheng-loong (梁正隆), an associate chair of SMIS and chief of the Department of International Medicine at E-Da Hospital, said the clerkships offer invaluable practical experience in a range of clinical fields. While rotating through different departments, the students can examine patients with their consent and perform noninvasive procedures under the supervision of physicians. Visits are also arranged to community hospitals and clinics to provide insights into the differing health care concerns in urban and rural areas.

As a teaching hospital accredited by U.S.-based Joint Commission International, one of the world's leading nonprofit patient safety organizations, E-Da boasts a wealth of medical training resources, Liang said. Students are instructed by experienced specialists and gain first-hand knowledge in operating state-of-the-art equipment, he added. This

commitment to adopting the latest technologies is shared by ISU, which in 2016 became the first university in Taiwan to install an Anatomage Table, an advanced 3-D anatomy imaging system that allows medical students to virtually dissect human organs and tissue.

Closing the Talent Gap

According to Liang, talent cultivation is a vital, often overlooked component of strengthening health care services in developing nations. "In addition to offering free supplies and services, our hospital has donated equipment to facilities in several diplomatic allies and other friendly countries," said the attending neurosurgeon, who has participated in multiple overseas aid missions. "However, later on we discovered some of the devices had broken down or were left unused because no one knew how to maintain or operate them."

One of the core goals of the medical degree scholarship is to address this lack of expertise. "Increasing the number of doctors in diplomatic allies is a more effective method of providing aid than sending medical missions," Liang said. "Sustainable health care development requires a steady supply of well-educated medical professionals."

Chen said the program also benefits ISU by promoting campus internationalization and boosting the visibility of the university's medical school. "International exchanges improve learning and teaching outcomes. They help students and faculty appreciate different cultures and enhance their communication skills in English and other languages," she said.

ISU has dedicated considerable effort to fostering connections





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- 01. Chen Yun-ju, left, associate chair of SMIS, and Liang Cheng-loong, chief of the Department of International Medicine at E-Da Hospital
- 02 & 03. Scholarship recipients participate in rounds and outpatient care at E-Da Hospital, which is located near ISU.
- 04 & 05. The university uses various aids to teach anatomy, including cutting-edge 3-D imaging systems and human organ models
- 06 & 07. SMIS students learn laboratory testing and analysis.



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01, 03, 04 & 07. Photos by Huang Chung-hsin



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with overseas institutions since its establishment in 1990. To date, it has signed sister relations agreements with 299 universities and 214 high schools in 24 nations, while its current student body includes more than 1,970 foreigners from 46 countries and territories. “The success of various measures to internationalize our campus and curriculums makes ISU highly qualified to host the medical scholarship program,” Chen said.

Life-Changing Experience

Carlos Cubero, a second-year SMIS student from Central American diplomatic ally Honduras, said he was drawn to Taiwan by its strong reputation for medical research and leading position in many fields such as robot-assisted minimally invasive surgery. “Taiwan doctors publish a lot of papers and are renowned internationally for their breakthroughs,” he said. “I came here because I wanted to get the best education possible.”

According to the 24-year-old, SMIS has a well-structured curriculum offering clear and practical instruction in all core aspects of modern medicine. “The university’s two affiliated hospitals are equipped with high-tech instruments and devices, allowing us to discover how the latest technologies are used,” he said. “I’m eager to learn about these advances so I can share this knowledge when I return home.”

Cubero noted that the opportunity to study traditional Chinese medicine was another factor in his decision to apply to SMIS. In Honduras, some patients, and particularly the elderly, prefer herbal alternatives to modern medicines, so combining Chinese and Western approaches could prove effective in encouraging them to seek treatment, he said.

Cody Jack, a fourth-year student from the Marshall Islands, is currently completing the clinical clerkship portion of his degree at E-Da Hospital. “Studying at ISU has been



- 01 & 02. The scholarship program aims to train the next generation of medical professionals from diplomatic allies.
- 03. SMIS students take Mandarin language classes.
- 04. Carlos Cubero, a second-year SMIS student from Honduras
- 05. Cody Jack, a fourth-year student from the Marshall Islands
- 06. David Alfred from the Marshall Islands was in the first class of SMIS graduates.
- 07 – 09. International students at ISU are encouraged to participate in various sports and cultural events such as dragon boat racing.

03 – 05. Photos by Huang Chung-hsin



amazing as I've learned an incredible amount of practical information and skills," the 27-year-old said. "I've no doubt that this program will help me develop the wide range of competencies needed to practice high-quality medicine."

After finishing high school, Jack earned a bachelor's degree in pre-medicine biology at Eastern Washington University in the U.S. He later heard about the TaiwanICDF program and decided to apply. "It's a generous full-ride scholarship. I'm very grateful for the opportunity to receive a free medical education," he said.

Once he completes his degree in June, Jack plans to return to his country and undertake an internship at a government hospital. His ultimate goal is to specialize in pediatrics and open a clinic in his village, a rural community with limited health care services.

According to Jack, there are only about 20 doctors serving the some 60,000 people in his country. Since the Marshall Islands does not have a medical school, these physicians mostly come from Fiji and the Philippines and few of them are specialists. "My sole motivation for studying medicine is that my country needs me to be a doctor," he said. "With the help of the Taiwan people, I'm going to do everything I can to achieve my goal." ■



Healthy Progress

Veteran medical professionals work to research, treat and prevent liver disease.

BY PAT GAO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF LIVER DISEASE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Every year, the Taipei City-based Health, Welfare and Environment Foundation holds the Medical Dedication Awards to recognize those who have made significant contributions to enhancing Taiwan's health care environment. Among the recipients of the 2017 awards were members of the Liver Disease Prevention and Treatment Research Foundation (LDRF), which has been touring local communities around Taiwan to conduct liver disease screenings for more than two decades.

Great progress has been made toward the eradication of liver diseases in Taiwan over the past 20 years, according to LDRF Executive Officer Yang Pei-ming (楊培銘). Statistics from the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) show that during the 1980s and most of the 1990s, chronic liver disease, including cirrhosis, was consistently ranked the sixth most common cause of death in the country. The number of cases began to decrease significantly around the turn of the century, with the illness falling to 10th place in 2016. There has also been a substantial decline in diagnoses of liver cancer, once the most common form of cancer in Taiwan.

According to Yang, a physician and professor emeritus at National Taiwan University's College of Medicine (NTUCM), in the early 1980s, one out of every five or six people in the country were carriers of hepatitis B, a major cause of cirrhosis and liver cancer. This meant that Taiwan had one of the highest infection rates in the world. "We had little choice but to make progress toward controlling the disease," he said. "Now the rate has dropped to below 1 percent among people under the age of 34."



01

- 01. Liver Disease Prevention and Treatment Research Foundation President Sheu Jin-chuan poses in front of an image of organization co-founder Sung Juei-low.
- 02. Sheu, center, along with LDRF Executive Officer Yang Pei-ming, right, receives the 2017 Medical Dedication Award from Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung.
- 03. The LDRF president conducts an abdominal ultrasound scan.

01 & 03. Photo by Huang Chung-hsin
 02. Courtesy of Health, Welfare and Environment Foundation



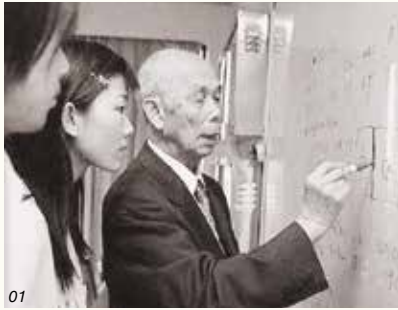
03

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Turning the Tide

A major turning point in the fight against hepatitis B came 34 years ago, when the government launched a nationwide vaccination program targeting infants born to mothers known to be carrying the virus. Because of the milestone measure,

those born in and after 1984 are dubbed “New Taiwanese” by many medical professionals like Yang and LDRF President Sheu Jin-chuan (許金川). Within two years of its introduction, the plan was expanded to cover all newborns, making Taiwan the first country in the world to



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conduct universal vaccination efforts against the disease. Many nations followed suit with similar initiatives soon afterward. “Those who contract viral hepatitis are all potential cirrhosis and liver cancer patients,” said Sheu, also a professor emeritus at NTUCM and former head of the Division of Gastroenterology at NTU Hospital’s Department of Internal Medicine. “Reducing the number of virus carriers through the vaccination program was really a breakthrough in effectively controlling liver disease.”

Sheu helped found LDRF together with his teacher Sung Juei-low (宋瑞樓), one of the first Taiwan physicians to specialize in hepatology. Sung was a graduate of Taihoku Imperial University’s Medical School, the forerunner of NTUCM founded during Japanese colonial rule (1895-1945). In the 1970s, he led an NTU Hospital research team that determined maternal transmission of hepatitis B was especially common via the birth canal. “Caesarean section was found to cause less infection than natural delivery,” Yang said. When hepatitis B vaccines became available in the early 1980s, Sung’s team

began promoting the idea of universal inoculation. In 1981, he was put in charge of a committee under the Department of Health, reorganized as the MOHW in 2013, to oversee efforts to control viral hepatitis. Sung later became a major force behind the landmark 1984 vaccination program.

National Effort

In the mid-2000s, after significant lobbying and other efforts by LDRF and similar organizations, the government began covering certain treatment expenses for hepatitis B and C under the National Health Insurance (NHI) program, marking another major step in the nation’s fight against liver disease. The NHI, launched in 1995 to provide universal health coverage, is widely regarded as one of Taiwan’s most notable achievements as it provides affordable and easily accessible medical services ranging from Western and traditional Chinese medicine to dental care.

At the beginning of 2017, NHI coverage was extended to oral forms of antiviral medications for those suffering from advanced cases of hepatitis C. LDRF does



not consider these efforts sufficient, and is calling for an expansion that would cover the medicine regardless of the variety or severity of the disease. In Taiwan, Yang noted, hepatitis B and C lead to more than 85 percent of all cirrhosis and liver cancer cases, while non-viral factors such as alcohol consumption, medication and metabolism problems are also major contributors.

The Silent Organ

Despite measures put in place to reduce the frequency of hepatitis, Yang said he is sometimes frustrated by the reluctance of virus carriers to actively seek medical treatment. “Only around a third of them do so and another third go to clinics or hospitals just once or twice. The rest of them don’t seem to care about it at all,” he said. “The liver is a silent organ, meaning symptoms of a disease usually don’t develop until it has reached very advanced stages.” As a result, there has not been a

significant decline in the death toll caused by chronic liver disease in “Old Taiwanese”—nationals over the age of 34—who did not receive hepatitis B vaccinations when they were young.

Consequently, LDRF will continue its efforts to promote hepatitis screenings through blood tests and abdominal ultrasound scans. Yang said a major mission for his group is to continue educating people about the development pattern of liver disease by organizing events for local community residents and releasing relevant articles in print and internet media. The organization also cooperates with local government medical departments and community health stations, particularly in such places as Miaoli County in northern Taiwan and the southern counties of Yunlin and Chiayi where there are higher concentrations of hepatitis C. Yang said he believes cases of the disease are more prevalent in these areas because local health workers failed to adequately disinfect needles in the past.

Yang and Sheu are also respectively CEO and president of the Taipei-based Good Liver Foundation, established in 2012 as an extension of LDRF. The organization operates the Good Liver Clinic in the capital’s downtown area. Sheu pointed out that the facility, which is part of the NHI system, was set up with the goal of helping form a hospital system specializing in the treatment and research of liver diseases.

Sheu insists that in the field of hepatology, there are still many issues and questions to be addressed to further bring down the number of hepatitis cases. “That’s why research and other efforts in fighting liver disease will not stop in the foreseeable future,” he said. ■

- 01. Sung teaches a class for interns at National Taiwan University Hospital in Taipei City in 2002.
- 02. The cover of a Taiwan health magazine from August 1984 shows an infant being vaccinated for hepatitis B at the start of a nationwide campaign to combat the disease.
- 03 – 06. Since its establishment in 1994, LDRF has toured communities around Taiwan to conduct liver disease screenings.

Second Chance

Taiwan's private sector is giving back by organizing and funding life-changing medical treatment for the economically disadvantaged.

BY MEG CHANG

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHINA
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

The humanitarian largesse extended by Taichung City-based China Medical University Hospital (CMUH) in central Taiwan and Chiayi County-headquartered Hong Fu Footwear Group (HFFG) in southern Taiwan has helped give a 13-year-old girl from Vietnam a new lease of life.

Born into a working class family in the central highlands province of Lam Dong, Nguyen Thi Loan was afflicted with congenital lymphedema in her left leg. Significant fluid retention and tissue swelling resulted in an unsightly limb and made walking near impossible. Over time, she became increasingly depressed and withdrawn, leaving her parents at a loss as how to return a smile to the face of their little ray of sunshine.

According to Loan's father, his daughter first underwent treatment for the condition as an infant at Ho Chi Minh City Children's Hospital. "Despite the best efforts of the doctors, the swelling continued to worsen and we feared for her life," he said.

The first glimmer of hope for Loan came in 2012 when her plight was brought to the attention of Chen Hung-chi (陳宏基), superintendent of CMUH International Medical Service Center, and local manufacturing firms. Soon Loan was in Taiwan receiving the medical care she so desperately needed.

"The patient weighed about 25 kilograms at that time, but 60 percent of that was in her left leg," Chen said. "My team removed some of the excess tissue in a series of operations and eventually Loan was able to walk without assistance."

But the cost of further surgery and extensive rehabilitation exceeded



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01. Chen Hung-chi, right, superintendent of China Medical University Hospital International Medical Service Center, examines Nguyen Thi Loan before an operation in 2016.
02. Walking without assistance, Loan enters a Christmas party organized for her by volunteers at CMUH.
03. Loan, front, takes part in a news conference at CMUH Jan. 11, 2017, in central Taiwan's Taichung City.

the financial means of the manufacturing firms, and Loan returned home when her condition stabilized. Not long after, she contracted an infection in the leg and underwent six operations in a regional hospital without success. At one point, a doctor cautioned that amputation might be the only way of saving her life.

“We were devastated by the news,” Loan’s father said. “There was nothing for it but to pray and hope for divine intervention.”

Upon learning of Loan’s condition, Chen contacted HFFG, which operates in the Southeast Asian country through subsidiary Hong Fu Vietnam Footwear Co. The company was quick to provide NT\$4 million (US\$133,330) for her treatment.

HFFG Vice Chairman Chang Chih-pan (張志邦) said it is hoped the donation will inspire more Taiwan-invested outfits in Vietnam to follow suit and play a bigger role in advancing the well-being of the communities in which they do business. “Taiwan and Vietnam enjoy robust relations,” he said, adding that there is great potential for expanded exchanges going forward.

According to Chen, Loan was an unusual Klippel-Trenaunay syndrome case involving anomalies in her leg, perineum, anus and spleen. “Treatment was anything but straightforward, requiring

coordination among specialists in anesthesiology, cardiology, gynecology, pediatrics, proctology and thoracic medicine,” he said.

In June 2016, Chen’s medical team suited up again and performed five major reconstructive surgeries on Loan, including one to remove a 15-kilogram lymphangioma on her leg. The operations were successful, and after several more months of follow-up treatment and rehabilitation at CMUH, she returned July 26, 2017, to Vietnam accompanied by Chen, a nurse and a pair of orthopedic shoes custom made by HFFG.

At a news conference shortly before her departure, Loan thanked Taiwan, CMUH and HFFG for giving her a second chance at life. “I cannot wait to ride a bicycle and play outside,” she said.

These heartfelt sentiments were echoed by Loan’s father, who said he is deeply grateful for the love and support shown by Taiwan. “My daughter wouldn’t be here today without this country and its outstanding health care.”

During the Taiwan Medical Miracle Sharing Conference staged July 27, 2017, in Ho Chi Minh City as part of the Taiwan Expo organized by Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), Loan and her father shared their story with attendees. Chen also

took the opportunity to highlight CMUH’s track record in complex reconstructive surgery, as well as its efforts in providing leading-edge procedures around the globe.

As news of Loan’s successful treatment started capturing headlines in Vietnam, more of her compatriots began reaching out to CMUH. One of the most recent cases involves an 11-year-old girl, also afflicted with lymphedema, who is seeking treatment at her own expense.

Vietnam is the International Medical Service Center’s second leading source of foreign patients at 15 percent, with mainland China No. 1 at 35 percent. Both numbers are expected to increase this year, according to CMUH.

“Loan’s situation demonstrates that love knows no borders and Taiwan is willing and able to share its world-class medical expertise,” Chen said. “CMUH will continue rallying local private sector support and giving hope to those most in need.” ■



03

Beyond Borders

Taiwan medical missions offer vital aid to disadvantaged communities around the world.



For more than half a century, the Republic of China (Taiwan) has provided medical aid in diplomatic allies and partner nations. While the state-supported International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF)—the country’s foremost foreign aid group—primarily focuses on yearslong infrastructure and training programs, Taiwan hospitals and nongovernmental organizations (NGO) conduct short-term medical missions around the world.

Changhua Christian Hospital in central Taiwan’s Changhua County is among the institutions providing vital care in disadvantaged

foreign communities. Last year, its physicians traveled to Myanmar and Papua New Guinea to deliver OB-GYN and family care as well as breast cancer treatment, respectively. Another prominent provider of medical services overseas is Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps. The NGO arranged missions involving diverse health care professionals to communities on five continents in 2017 alone.

The commitment shown by hospitals, medical professionals and NGOs reflects Taiwan society’s respect for health care as a fundamental human right. ■

—by Jim Hwang

01. Taipei Medical University Hospital, Swaziland, 2016
02. Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps, Macedonia, 1999
03. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Thailand, 2011

01. Courtesy of TMUH
02. Courtesy of Taiwan Root
03. Courtesy of Chen Yu-fang, MMH





01

- 01. Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital, Mexico, 2017
- 02. Taiwan Root, India, 2007
- 03. Kaohsiung Medical University Hospital, Solomon Islands, 2017
- 04. Health care professionals take part in a training program for foreign medical personnel at Far Eastern Memorial Hospital in New Taipei City in 2018.
- 05. The Red Cross Society of the Republic of China (Taiwan), Nepal, 2015
- 06. Changhua Christian Hospital, Swaziland, 2006
- 07. Changhua Christian Hospital, Swaziland, 2008

01. Courtesy of Chuang Hui-zhen, TTCH, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation
 02. Courtesy of Taiwan Root
 03. Courtesy of KMUH
 04. Courtesy of FEMH
 05. Courtesy of ROC Red Cross
 06 & 07. Courtesy of CCH



02





07





01. Taiwan Root, Madagascar, 2012
02. Changhua Christian Hospital, Thailand, 2015
03. Taiwan Root, the Philippines, 2013
04. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Thailand, 2016
05. Changhua Christian Hospital, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 2011
06. Taipei Medical University Hospital, Marshall Islands, 2016
07. Kaohsiung Medical University Hospital, Solomon Islands, 2011

01 & 03. Courtesy of Taiwan Root
02 & 05. Courtesy of CCH
04. Courtesy of Chen Yu-fang, MMH
06. Courtesy of TMUH
07. Courtesy of KMUH





Health for all —
Taiwan can help

For more information, please visit: www.leavenoonebehind.com.tw

