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.

Indonesia’s Minister of Health Nafsiah Mboi (left) talking to doctors during a press event on the occasion of the implementation of the new universal health care scheme in late December. (DT/Poto Kegiatan Lainnya, Indonesia)

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

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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.

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 6,487 (33 per cent) were dentists. The report also showed that 1,000 (5.3 per cent) worked as dental hygienists, 1,276 (6.6 per cent) as dental therapists, 1,161 (6 per cent) as dental practitioners and 738 (3.8 per cent) as oral health therapists.

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German professor replaces Samaranayake as dean of HK dental school

Prof. Thomas Flemmig to assume top position in July

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 objectives:

• 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 periodontics for the management of periododontitis.
• 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.

To be able to describe laser periodontal treatment to their patients.

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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 workforce 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. A government regulation to ban these people from practising was overturned by the constitutional court in Jakarta last year.

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.