

HEALTH FOR ALL

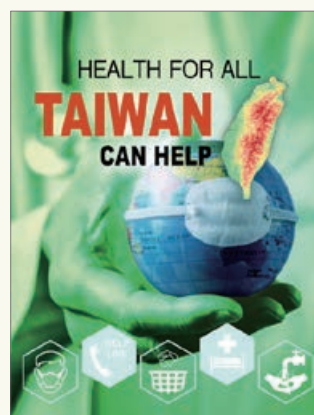
TAIWAN

CAN HELP



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Clarion Call

The global outbreak of coronavirus, first reported in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, is presenting the international community with an unprecedented array of economic, medical, political and social challenges. Taiwan, on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic less than 130 kilometers from China, is not immune. In fact, the country is soldiering on outside the support network of the World Health Organization (WHO).

This wholly unsatisfactory state of affairs is the direct result of China's refusal to allow Taiwan a voice in the WHO. Despite a highly touted National Health Insurance system and a long track record of successful cross-border medical initiatives benefiting people of all ethnicities, the country remains shut out of the U.N. specialized agency on political grounds. Such a blinkered and politically motivated approach, which threatens the health and well-being of Taiwan's 23 million people, makes no sense when the international family of nations needs to come together in combating coronavirus and realizing Health For All.

Despite receiving a cold shoulder from the WHO, Taiwan is warmly embraced by allies and like-minded partners, as well as governmental and nongovernmental bodies acting honestly, openly and transparently in the best interests of those they represent. These countries and groups are rallying to a noble cause, voicing support for Taiwan and the need for its meaningful participation in the activities, mechanisms and meetings of the WHO like the 73rd World Health Assembly (WHA) scheduled for May 17-21 in Geneva.

The unprecedented backing comes from all corners. Leaders, lawmakers, medical experts, media pundits, activists and celebrities are among a growing legion acknowledging Taiwan as a beacon of freedom, democracy, human rights and rules-based order, as well as a force for good in the world. Sadly and regrettably, it took the COVID-19 pandemic to create the conditions

for many to better understand and fully appreciate the ways Taiwan Can Help.

Necessity is the mother of invention. Taiwan has taken the spirit of this proverb to heart, using it to shape a policy applied with great vim and vigor to coronavirus-fighting efforts. When signs first surfaced of atypical pneumonia cases in Wuhan, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) drew on the country's deep experience with severe acute respiratory syndrome and immediately took action.

This included carrying out onboard health inspections of passengers returning from Wuhan, fever screening of arrivals, and contact, occupation and travel assessments. Other measures comprised implementing mandatory reporting of severe clinical cases by health care facilities and heightened protective equipment standards for at-risk medical personnel, as well as raising awareness of prevention measures among travelers and keeping the public abreast of the latest related developments via TV and social media platforms.

What was perceived at the time as an aggressive strategy by the MOHW and CDC saved lives and is now known globally as the Taiwan Model. It also opened the door for the country to collaborate closely with natural allies on coronavirus vaccine development and studies through Academia Sinica—Taiwan's foremost research institution—and share surgical masks, forehead thermometers, gloves, goggles, gowns, rapid testing kits and other equipment. Agreements with nations the world over regarding donations and exchanges of such essential medical items have generated widespread media coverage, winning the country even more friends abroad.

With the COVID-19 pandemic showing no sign of abating, cooperation, friendship, support, trust and unity are just what the doctor ordered to allow the world to heal. It is long past time for the WHO to heed the clarion call of the international community and give Taiwan a seat at the WHA table. ■

Health News

World leaders praise Taiwan's efforts fighting coronavirus

Taiwan's use of timely, transparent and high-tech methods to combat coronavirus has earned praise from the leaders of allies and like-minded partners around the world, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) March 24. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said in an interview March 15 that when it comes to coronavirus, the country intends to closely follow the "Taiwanese model." She cited guidelines for mass gatherings, which she believes have been instrumental in helping prevent community spread of the disease. This follows Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech March 14 at his Jerusalem office, where he announced intentions to use similar technological methods as those implemented by Taiwan to track the virus's spread. Nicaragua Vice President Rosario Murillo also announced March 11 that the Central American ally will ask for advice on disease-fighting measures from Taiwan's ambassador to the country. In a Time magazine article published March 18 titled "Taiwan Has Been Shut Out of Global Health Discussions. Its Participation Could Have Saved Lives," former Denmark Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen described the country's application of big data, centralized command and clear messaging as highly effective, adding that the World Health Organization needs Taiwan at the table. Approval also came from officials, lawmakers and medical professionals of diplomatic allies Belize, Paraguay, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as like-minded partners in Argentina, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Panama, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Venezuela, the Netherlands, the U.S., the U.K. and the European Parliament.



Partnerships to combat COVID-19 agreed with US, EU

Taiwan will work with the U.S. and EU to combat COVID-19, spotlighting the country's commitment to sharing its expertise with like-minded partners, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) March 19. The Taiwan-U.S. Joint Statement on a Partnership against Coronavirus signed by MOFA Minister Jaushieh Joseph Wu (吳釗燮) and American Institute in Taiwan Director Brent Christensen March 18 states that both sides will share best practices and collaborate on activities including R&D of rapid testing kits, medicines and vaccines; contact tracing techniques and technology; joint conferences by scientists and experts; and cooperation and exchange of medical supplies and equipment. The statement signifies Taiwan's continuing work with the U.S. in the fight against coronavirus, the MOFA said, adding that sharing data and resources while utilizing cutting-edge techniques could help safeguard the health and well-being of people around the world. A tie-up between Academia Sinica and the EU was also announced by the country's top research institution and Filip Grzegorzewski, head of European Economic and Trade Office in Taiwan. According to Academia Sinica President James C. Liao (廖俊智), the organization is ramping up virus research, as evidenced by plans to build an open science platform featuring coronavirus-related work from 15 domestic research institutes. The results will be shared with EU member states to help manage COVID-19, he added.



Taiwan's efforts managing coronavirus earn international acclaim

Taiwan's effective coronavirus-fighting efforts have earned acclaim across international media, featuring in articles from 243 outlets and spotlighting growing support worldwide for the country's inclusion in the activities, mechanisms and meetings of the World Health Organization (WHO), according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) March 6. In an article titled "The Coronavirus Outbreak: How Democratic Taiwan Outperformed Authoritarian China" in The Diplomat, Victor Pu said Taiwan has shown the world the best defense against disease is free flow of information. Taiwan's success comes despite continued shutout from the WHO as noted by David Keene in his piece headlined "Playing coronavirus politics: China puts Taiwan and world at risk" in The Washington Times. He said Taiwan has abundant experience and expertise stemming from the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak, adding that in the face of COVID-19, China should no longer block Taiwan's membership of the global body. Other editorials, opinion pieces and stories have been published by media outlets including The Guardian and The Edinburgh Reporter from the U.K.; Le Monde and TourMag.com, France; International Affairs Review, India; Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland; Fodor's Travel, Canada; Getaway, South Africa; and The Star, St. Lucia. According to the MOFA, a growing chorus backing Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO is testament to the country's contributions to global public health. The government will continue working with allies and like-minded partners to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the ministry added.



MOFA thanks UK lawmakers for supporting Taiwan

A letter by 55 U.K. lawmakers sent to the World Health Organization (WHO) expressing grave concern over its unfair treatment of Taiwan is highly appreciated, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) March 4. Signed by Lord Rogan and Martin Vickers—co-chairs of the British-Taiwanese All-Party Parliamentary Group—and 53 other lawmakers from both houses of the British Parliament, the letter urges WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to correct the global body's wrongful classification of Taiwan as under China's jurisdiction. The WHO's erroneous reports regarding the COVID-19 outbreak are impeding timely information exchanges, the lawmakers said, noting that Taiwan's experience and expertise in dealing with health emergencies could be of great value to the international community. The sentiment was shared by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, minister of state for the Commonwealth and the U.N., in a written answer Feb. 26 to a question by Lord Blencathra. Ahmad stressed the importance of allowing all countries and territories, including Taiwan, full access to the latest information on coronavirus. The reply follows the minister's oral response to Baroness Falkner of Margravine, Lord Collins of Highbury and Lord Dholakia Feb. 10 in the upper house. Taiwan can play a vital role as an observer at events like the World Health Assembly, he said.

President Tsai signs COVID-19 relief act

A bill aimed at mitigating any impact from the COVID-19 outbreak was signed into law by President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) Feb. 25 at the Presidential Office in Taipei City, reaffirming the government's commitment to ensuring public health while maintaining social and economic stability. Effective retrospectively from Jan. 15 and running through June 30, 2021, the relief act comprises 18 articles providing compensation, subsidies and tax breaks for businesses, individuals, medical institutions, schools and other organizations affected by COVID-19. It also offers rewards for those who make significant contributions to outbreak prevention and outlines punishments for violating disease-related regulations. According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), the act is a legal foundation for the government to issue responsive epidemic-fighting decrees or measures, such as expropriating private facilities and materials when necessary. The MOHW said a special budget of NT\$60 billion (US\$1.97 billion) has been set aside for the act, pending review by the Legislature.



MOHW sets up Taiwan epidemic command center



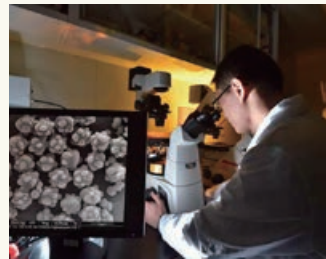
A Central Epidemic Command Center was established Jan. 20 by Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) to manage the response to a new coronavirus first discovered in the Chinese city of Wuhan late last year. Overseen by Chou Jih-haw (周志浩), director-general of the MOHW's Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the center will work to prevent a domestic outbreak of pneumonia as seen in China, as well as in an increasing number of cases reported in Japan, South Korea and Thailand. On Jan. 15, the disease was designated a Category 5 communicable health threat on par with Ebola and Middle East respiratory syndrome by the CDC. This requires medical

institutions to notify the MOHW of suspected cases within 24 hours of initial treatment. Numerous precautionary measures are in place to protect the people, the CDC said. These include better planning and infection controls at medical institutions, conducting relevant drills, enhancing public awareness and tightening inspections at airports and other ports of arrival. With the Lunar New Year holiday fast approaching, the CDC urges those planning to travel to Wuhan or nearby areas to avoid direct contact with wild animals and individuals exhibiting flu symptoms, refrain from visiting crowded public places or livestock markets, frequently wash hands with soap and wear a surgical mask. Anyone who experiences symptoms of respiratory infection within 14 days of returning to Taiwan should wear a surgical mask, seek immediate medical treatment and inform health care personnel of recent travel history, the CDC said.

ITRI cancer treatment technology wins bronze at Edison Awards

State-backed Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) won bronze in the cellular research medical/dental category at the U.S.-based Edison Awards March 18 for developing an innovative cancer treatment, spotlighting Taiwan's R&D prowess. ITRI's iKNOBEADS, short for biomimetic knobby magnetic beads, are microparticles with tailorable sizes and shapes that can strengthen and activate T cells to fight cancer more effectively. The morphologies can create

a larger surface area to improve interactions with key regulators of inflammation in the human immune system. ITRI has now won Edison Awards for four consecutive years, claiming prizes for an



ultrafast rechargeable aluminum battery, a device for boosting visibility during fires and the iRoadSafe traffic accident prevention system in 2017-2019, respectively. Founded in 1973, ITRI fosters innovation-driven sectors in Taiwan, with recent research endeavors focusing on such fields as health, smart cities and sustainable development. It has helped incubate over 270 high-tech companies, including global integrated circuit powerhouse Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. The Edison Awards, established in 1987, honor excellence in new product and service design, R&D and marketing. Winners of this year's prizes were chosen from a selection of around 400 of the world's top innovations by more than 3,000 leading business executives.

Public satisfaction in Taiwan's NHI system hits record high

Public satisfaction with Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) system hit a record high of 89.7 percent in 2019, up from 86.5 percent in 2018, according to the NHI Administration

under the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Ease of access to treatment topped the survey at 41.6 percent, followed by inexpensive medical care, 41.5 percent; and reasonably priced insurance premium, 19.9 percent. The needs-based approach, which encourages users with minor ailments to seek treatment at small clinics so as to reduce pressure on Taiwan's major hospitals, recorded 70 percent approval. Of those in disagreement, nearly 70 percent cited perceived superior treatment at major hospitals as the main reason. Nearly half felt the approach was potentially problematic as they could not discern the severity of a health issue. On the service provider side of the survey, physicians and dentists indicated satisfaction levels of 33.7 percent and 36.6 percent, respectively, with dissatisfaction levels at 19.1 percent and 14.9 percent. Established in 1995, the NHI covers more than 99 percent of Taiwan's 23 million people and offers a comprehensive range of leading-edge medical services. The annual survey was conducted by Taipei City-based National Yang-Ming University between July 1 and Sept. 10, 2019, via landline, mobile and online platforms. Respondents comprised a random sampling of 7,234 NHI users aged 20 and above.



NCKU team's chronic kidney disease solution bags iGEM gold



An innovative solution for chronic kidney disease (CKD) developed by a team from Tainan City-based National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) in southern Taiwan won gold at the recently staged International Genetically Engineered Machine competition in Boston. The solution manages p-Cresol accumulation stemming from CKD with a two-pronged approach utilizing NCKU-developed CreSolve and CreSense. The former consists of a type of engineered probiotic, while the latter is a quantification device measuring p-Cresol levels in plasma via blood separation and living bacteria bio-sensing techniques. Those with CKD record

increasing levels of p-Cresol as the condition progresses. This leads to a variety of complications and life-threatening health issues such as cardiovascular disease. According to NCKU, the 24-member student-faculty team beat out 200-plus rivals from leading international tertiary institutions to claim the prestigious undergraduate division honor. It also finished on top in the categories of hardware, measurement, model, presentation and therapeutics. Staged Oct. 31 to Nov. 4, 2019, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston, the 15th edition of iGEM involved 353 teams from 44 countries and territories. The competition is considered a global showcase for advances in the fields of electrical engineering, energy, information engineering, medicine and physics.

VP Chen vows to deepen Taiwan's Asia-Pacific medical ties

Taiwan is a vital member of the global public health community and is working to expand medical collaboration and information sharing with countries throughout the Asia-Pacific, Vice President Chen Chien-jen (陳建仁) said Oct. 20, 2019. Chen made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 2019 Global Health Forum in Taiwan. Organized by the Ministries of Health and Welfare and Foreign Affairs, the two-day event involved 1,500 experts and officials from 33 countries and territories discussing key issues such as aging societies, chronic disease, data analysis, urban environments and public health. According to Chen, Taiwan is expected to become a super-aged society, with 20 percent of the population aged 65 years or older by 2026. This is why the government is leaving no stone unturned in promoting the Long-term Care Plan 2.0, he said. The 10-year initiative is a community-based services network integrating medical and preventative health care resources. Taiwan has also made headway in bringing local laws and regulations for pharmaceuticals and medical devices more in line with international standards, Chen said, citing the country's participation as an official member in the recently staged biannual meeting of International Council for Harmonization of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use. Chen said the New Southbound Policy is another important platform for Taiwan to share its medical know-how and build a seamless regional disease prevention network. A key plank in the government's national development strategy, the NSP seeks to deepen Taiwan's agricultural, business, cultural, education, tourism and trade ties with the 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, six South Asian countries, Australia and New Zealand.

President Tsai pledges to boost Taiwan's contribution to global health care

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said Nov. 8, 2019, that Taiwan will boost contributions to global health care via expanded cooperation and exchanges with

world-class organizations such as American Medical Association (AMA). Epidemic prevention, medical care and public health transcend national boundaries, as health is a basic human right and universal value, Tsai said. Taiwan and its physicians have earned global recognition in this regard when dealing with major events like severe acute respiratory syndrome, H1N1 and dengue fever, she added. Tsai made the remarks while receiving AMA President Dr. Patrice Harris at the Presidential Office in Taipei City. According to Tsai, Chicago-headquartered AMA is one of the most important and influential international professional associations for physicians. Taiwan has hosted many AMA delegations in the past, Tsai said, adding that the frequency of exchanges underscores the depth of friendship between the two sides. Tsai also took the opportunity to thank AMA for its staunch support of Taiwan's bid for World Health Organization participation and inclusion in the International Health Regulations network.



Photo: Central News Agency, <https://goodideas-studio.com>, Industrial Technology Research Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Cheng Kung University, National Health Insurance Administration and Presidential Office



Leading by Example

Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) discusses how Taiwan Can Help achieve the World Health Organization's vision of Health For All.

PHOTOS BY CHIN HUNG-HAO



01. Pedestrians cross the road while wearing surgical masks in Taipei City. Taiwan's success managing the COVID-19 pandemic has been partially attributed to the high awareness of disease prevention best practices among the public.
02. Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung takes a question at a daily press conference held to provide the latest news regarding the coronavirus outbreak March 10 in Taipei.

02. Photo by Michelle Lin

Taiwan Review: Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) system has been operating since March 1995. What makes the program stand out as a successful example of universal health coverage?

Chen Shih-chung: NHI coverage spans both Western and traditional Chinese medicine as well as dental, childbirth and rehab care. These are all available under the NHI with premiums scaling according to how much someone earns, which ensures fairness.

The system is continuously expanding to cover new medications and treatments based on evaluations of effectiveness and affordability. For example, a new drug for treating hepatitis C was introduced in January 2017, and immune checkpoint inhibitors have been used in cancer immunotherapy since April 2019.

This is all possible while covering more than 99 percent of people living in Taiwan. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) last year, 89.7 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the NHI, the highest approval rate in the system's history. According to the Health Care Index compiled by [online business magazine] CEOWORLD, Taiwan's



health care system ranked first among 89 countries and territories.

TR: The efficiency of the system owes much to projects promoting digital health. Can you cite some examples?

Chen: I must praise the NHI MediCloud System, via which patients' medical records can be shared among staffers at different hospitals and clinics. This helps prevent physicians from prescribing the same medications or ordering the same tests for a patient, reducing medical resource wastage.

For patients, the My Health Bank tool provides easy access to medical records to assist with health management. People can access medical history from the past three years using mobile devices.

TR: The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife. Can you tell us more

about the roles these professions play in Taiwan's health care system?

Chen: These two professions absolutely lie at the heart of health care in Taiwan, as they do in systems around the world. They play key roles in fulfilling the WHO's Health For All mission. Approximately 174,000 nurses and 180 midwives are currently practicing in Taiwan. To level-up skills in these sectors, the MOHW has held a test for licensed nurses since 2006 and provided extra training. Last year the annual exam was made biannual to encourage more nurses to advance their careers.

The MOHW has also invested heavily in nursing in the community with the establishment of home care nursing centers, from which nurses can visit patients in their own homes. By providing guidance and training sessions to interested individuals and organizations, the ministry is expecting 1,000 of these centers to open by 2025.

Global networking is also important for the sectors' development. An international seminar is scheduled to take place in Taipei City in September bringing together nursing professionals from home and abroad. Co-organized by Taiwan Nurses Association and International Council of Nurses [the largest organization of its kind worldwide], the event is expected to attract about 200 attendees.

TR: Taiwan is gaining worldwide recognition for its efforts combating coronavirus, performing well to date compared with other developed nations during the COVID-19 pandemic. What has been the secret to this success?

Chen: We gained valuable insights from Taiwan's experience controlling the devastating SARS [severe acute respiratory syndrome] outbreak in 2003, which helped shape our current response to COVID-19.

Shortly after the outbreak, Taiwan promulgated the regulations governing the Central Epidemic Command Center in 2004 to give the government power to establish a dedicated workforce to address major public health emergencies. Improvements have since been made in various aspects such as implementing an optimized surveillance system, strengthened border controls and quarantine rules, and enhanced contagious diseases screening.

Thanks to the lessons learned and changes made, Taiwan is always vigilant and can respond to an outbreak promptly. As a result, despite being widely predicted to be one of the countries hardest hit by the virus due to our geographical proximity to China, Taiwan has so far reported fewer cases than Japan, South Korea,



the U.S. and many European countries. So, I think Taiwan deserves the recognition we have received from the international community.

TR: What measures has Taiwan taken specifically since the world first learned of COVID-19?

Chen: As soon as 27 cases of pneumonia with unknown cause were first reported in Wuhan, China on Dec. 31, 2019, Taiwan decided to conduct onboard quarantine on all flights from Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak. This was the first key step in successfully containing the disease's spread in Taiwan. We have since taken measures to minimize the risk of imported cases, such as closely tracking and tracing people traveling from high-risk areas, and constantly reviewing and updating our immigration policies as the situation evolves.

Slowing community spread is another one of our key strategies. Our public health and civil authorities work with the police in a coordinated effort to manage people under home isolation or quarantine. Such interagency collaboration ensures the

effectiveness of these measures and lessens the burden on public health agencies. In addition, we passed the Special Act for Prevention, Relief and Revitalization Measures for Severe Pneumonia with Novel Pathogens [on Feb. 25] which stipulates that those who fail to meet the obligation of mandatory quarantine will be fined, while those who fully comply with the requirements will be entitled to monetary compensation.

TR: How is technology being utilized in the fight against the disease?

Chen: We track the cellphone locations of quarantined individuals to ensure they remain at home. We have also combined the databases of the National Health Insurance Administration, National Immigration Agency and Taiwan Centers for Disease Control to leverage big data analysis. For example, when accessing a patient's record with his or her NHI card, health care providers will be alerted if the patient has recently visited a high-risk area or had close contact with confirmed cases of COVID-19. In the absence of his or her NHI card, the patient's ID number may alternatively be used to access travel and contact histories. This ensures health care providers have full disclosure of relevant information.

In addition, to prevent panic buying and ensure public access to surgical masks, ICT professionals spent two days modifying and testing the NHI's databases to create a name-based mask distribution system. The program was introduced on Feb. 6 and allows the public to purchase masks at a standard price with a weekly quota using an NHI card by visiting public health centers, NHI-contracted pharmacies and

drugstores. This initiative has proven effective at a time when there is a global shortage of personal protective equipment.

TR: As cases continue to rise globally, is Taiwan working on medical breakthroughs that could help ease the situation?

Chen: The National Health Research Institutes (NHRI) launched various projects for combating coronavirus shortly after the disease was discovered at the end of last year. As the only organization in Taiwan qualified to produce blood serum from horses injected with the virus, NHRI is now preparing an equine serum for testing on patients with COVID-19 who are in a critical condition at its National Institute of Infectious Diseases and Vaccinology (NIIDV).

Regarding inoculation, NIIDV is focusing on peptide vaccines but is also developing other types. If

everything goes as planned, human clinical trials can start shortly. It is also developing a rapid test using SARS antibodies capable of detecting the COVID-19 coronavirus.

NHRI's Institute of Biotechnology and Pharmaceutical Research has also conducted trials synthesizing up to one gram of remdesivir, an experimental antiviral with potential to treat COVID-19. This paves the way for mass production in case of a major outbreak. In addition, the institute is using artificial intelligence to select medicines most likely to successfully treat COVID-19, with a focus on drugs that can inhibit SARS and are already on the market.

TR: Does this pandemic highlight the importance of Taiwan participating in the World Health Assembly (WHA)? What contributions can Taiwan make?

Chen: Any response to a global pandemic is incomplete without Taiwan. As we're situated strategically between East and Southeast Asia, our absence in coordinated international health efforts can lead to disastrous consequences.

We know from our SARS experience that global cooperation is indispensable in the fight against a contagious disease. Therefore, as a responsible member of the global community, Taiwan has observed the International Health Regulations since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, duly investigating and reporting confirmed cases to the WHO. We have also kept China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and the EU up to date on the situation in Taiwan, as well as uploading information on viral sequences to the database of the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data.

Admitting Taiwan to the WHA will allow our officials to engage in discussions with public health leaders from around the world and secure access to timely information. It will also be an occasion where Taiwan can share our experiences in areas such as testing, diagnosis, border control and community outbreak prevention. To avoid a repeat of the current pandemic and effectively ensure global health security, the world must take action to improve communication and transparency. ■

—interview by Oscar Chung



01. A guest holds out a hand to be sprayed with sanitizer before entering a hotel in Taipei.
02. Doctors in Taiwan can quickly learn about patients' travel and contact histories by reading their National Health Insurance cards.
03. Passengers are monitored for signs of fever at a Taipei Metro station.



Expanding Outreach

Taiwan's medical cooperation with NSP target countries is improving lives and regional health.

BY KELLY HER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHANGHUA CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL



01. More children are smiling in Thailand as a result of the Ministry of Health and Welfare's One Country, One Center initiative.
02. Representatives of Taiwan hospitals and medical firms take part in the country's 2019 expo in Hanoi, Vietnam.
03. Dr. Pham Nhu Ngoc from Vietnam, right, undergoes six months of specialized cardiology training at Taipei Veterans General Hospital.
04. Yellow-gowned doctors from Vietnam receive clinical instruction at TVGH's Department of Anesthesiology.
05. Lin Chih-ching, director of TVGH International Medical Service Center, highlights the countries his hospital has established cooperative ties with over the past 11 years.

03 & 05. Photos by Chen Mei-ling



Dr. Pham Nhu Ngoc, a cardiologist of three years' standing at Ho Chi Minh City-based Thu Duc District Hospital in Vietnam, is a walking, talking advertisement for the success of Taiwan government efforts to build better tomorrows for the people of New Southbound Policy (NSP) target countries.

Having undergone six months of specialized training at Taipei Veterans General Hospital (TVGH) until March, Pham is impressed with the facility's equipment, services, personnel, and deeply entrenched culture of commitment. "As my area of expertise is cardiac postoperative care, I was excited to learn how to manage common complications like bleeding and respiratory problems," she said.

According to Pham, TVGH's program goes beyond enhancing clinical knowledge. "Practicing English is a big bonus, as is adapting to new working conditions and procedures," she said. "Taiwan is a beautiful country in which to learn and upgrade my skill sets."

To date, more than 40 Vietnamese doctors have participated in the TVGH program for periods of

one to six months. The hospital also sends its senior surgeons to Vietnam to conduct demonstrations, as well as organizes seminars showcasing Taiwan-made medical devices and pharmaceuticals. These undertakings are implemented under the One Country, One Center (OCOC) initiative launched by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) in June 2018.

Farsighted Initiative

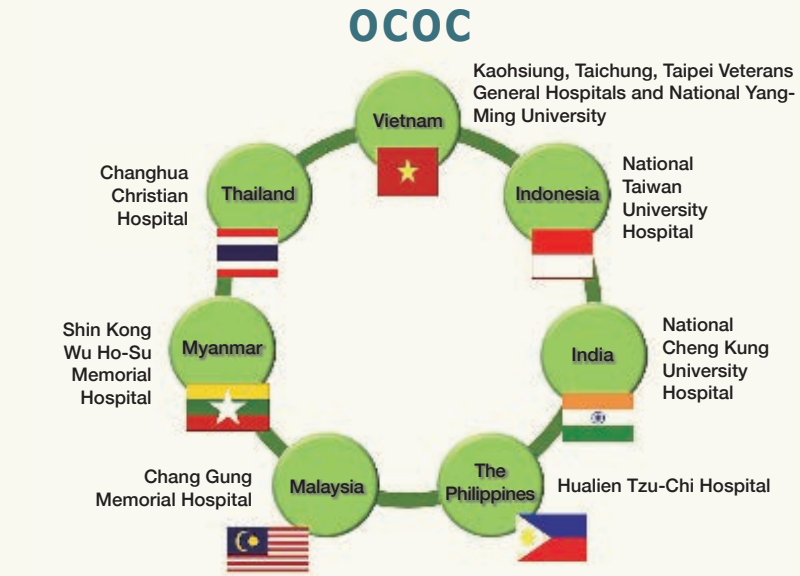
OCOC is an NSP-centric platform for assessing market opportunities and medical regulations, establishing culturally sensitive treatment environments and providing health consultation services for Taiwan businesspeople. A key plank in the government's national development strategy, NSP seeks to deepen Taiwan's agricultural, business, cultural, education, tourism and trade ties with 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations member states, six South Asian countries, Australia and New Zealand.

Seven medical centers take part in OCOC, with each concentrating on an NSP target country: Chang Gung Memorial Hospital in New Taipei City, Malaysia; Changhua Christian Hospital (CCH) in the



- 01. Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung
- 02. Taiwan medical centers responsible for New Southbound Policy target countries participating in OCOC.
- 03. A nurse from Thailand, center, visits a dialysis facility at Changhua Christian Hospital in the central Taiwan county.
- 04. Nina Kao, center, chief executive officer of CCH's Overseas Medical Mission Center, introduces her hospital's facilities and services to visitors at Taiwan Smart Healthcare Pavilion in Bangkok.
- 05. A medical robot takes center stage during a Taiwan-Thailand smart health care event in Bangkok.
- 06. Children are the main beneficiaries of CCH free clinics in Thailand.
- 07. Young Thai nationals brush up on CCH-instructed oral hygiene techniques.

01. Photo by Chen Mei-ling



02



central Taiwan county, Thailand; Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital in eastern Taiwan, the Philippines; National Cheng Kung University Hospital in southern Taiwan's Tainan City, India; National Taiwan University Hospital in Taipei, Indonesia; Shin Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital in Taipei, Myanmar; and TVGH in partnership with veterans general hospitals in central Taiwan's Taichung City, southern Taiwan's Kaohsiung City as well as National Yang-Ming University in Taipei, Vietnam.

Deepening Connections

MOHW Minister Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) views OCOC as an effective way of sharing Taiwan's health care experiences and know-how. "Another goal is to connect people, markets and supply chains while cultivating talent and increasing mutual understanding and trust," he said.

Trainees are more than just an investment in the here and now, Chen said. "They're expected to double as seed teachers upon returning home, helping amplify the effect of OCOC and opening the door for tie-ups with Taiwan's medical industry firms throughout the NSP region."

From January 2018 to July 2019, the medical centers trained 484 medical professionals and assisted 98 Taiwan drug and medical device companies secure orders worth over US\$2.2 million. They also signed 78 memorandums of understanding on cooperation with partner hospitals, according to the MOHW.

Facilitating the creation of a regional network for managing communicable diseases is another objective of OCOC. In 2018, Taiwan established partnerships with Indonesia and Vietnam in the



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control and treatment of dengue fever and tuberculosis, respectively. "Taiwan's track record in tackling serious public health issues is internationally recognized and respected," Chen said. "We're willing and able to share our expertise for the benefit of all."

Lin Chih-ching (林志慶), director of TVGH International Medical Service Center, is on the same page as Chen. Taiwan is a leader in many key fields, and stands ready to further contribute to raising international health standards, he said. "OCOC offers us the chance to engage in medical diplomacy while giving our staffers additional front-line experience."

Progressive Partnerships

The center has implemented cooperative projects with six countries in its 11-year existence. Vietnam is a

particularly fruitful staging ground, with TVGH pediatric surgeons earning praise for assisting in liver transplants at Vietnam National Children's Hospital in Hanoi. In addition, TVGH works with 19 institutions such as Hanoi-based Friendship Hospital, Hanoi Medical University and Thu Duc District



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- 01. A BriteMED Technology Inc. staffer details her company's health care solutions to medical professionals from Myanmar in New Taipei City.
- 02. Lectures staged by Shin Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital are raising health awareness among Taiwan businesspeople based in Myanmar.
- 03. Health care workers from Myanmar, left and second left, receive on-the-job training at Shin Kong.
- 04. Alex Hung, seated, fifth left, administrative deputy superintendent at Shin Kong, is joined by hospital executives and Myanmar medical personnel at the opening of a training program.
- 05. Advanced equipment is helping Shin Kong fly the flag abroad for Taiwan's high-quality health care.

01 - 05. Courtesy of Shin Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital

Hospital through wide-ranging cooperative agreements. Digitization is another area in which Taiwan Can Help NSP target countries via the OCOC initiative. CCH has thrown its weight behind the eHealth Strategy developed by Thailand's Ministry of Public Health. The 2017-2026 plan seeks to harness the power of digital technology to create a more effective medical system.

With 10 branches boasting more than 8,000 employees, CCH is a proven health care performer. In 2017, it built Taiwan's first green and smart hospital in the western county of Yunlin—a facility utilizing cutting-edge information and communication technology (ICT) and cost-conscious rollout measures. The institution delivers top-notch medical services while serving as a test bed for local businesses to put artificial intelligence solutions, big

data analytics and cloud computing methods through their paces before marketplace release.

Broad Cooperation

Nina Kao (高小玲), chief executive officer of CCH's Overseas Medical Mission Center, said a core mission involves building a bridge between Taiwan's smart health care industry and medical institutions in Thailand. This encompasses organizing and participating in corporate visits, industry forums, matchmaking events and trade shows. In addition, CCH holds training courses and study tours for Thai hospital executives in Taiwan, as well as health examinations, lectures and remote treatment for the country's businesspeople in Thailand.

"OCOC is definitely a move in the right direction given the emergence of Southeast Asia as a potential-laden market," Ko said, adding

that CCH's participation in the initiative is a win-win for the region and Taiwan. "In fact, our presence in Thailand is also sparking interest in Vietnam for digital-related products and services like diagnostic sets, management systems and robotics."

This fact is not lost on Alex Hung (洪子仁), administrative deputy superintendent at Shin Kong Wu Ho-Su Memorial Hospital. "We started cooperating with Myanmar Academy of Family Physicians in training personnel and recruiting doctors in 2015," he said. "The sky really is the limit with what can be achieved in one of the region's sleeping giants."

The hospital is uniquely qualified to fly the flag for Taiwan in Myanmar due to its previous international experience. It has sent

medical missions, conducted capacity building and facility upgrade projects, and performed patient referrals and transfers in Palau—one of the country's Pacific allies—since 2007. These endeavors saw the institution awarded a Friend of Foreign Service Medal for advancing Taiwan's medical diplomacy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018.

"What we want is to replicate our cooperative model with Palau in Myanmar and take it to the next level," Hung said. "Even more can be accomplished as we share expertise in specific fields such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, health management, ophthalmology and preventive medicine."

Thirty medical professionals from Myanmar, including

administrators, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and technicians, received clinical instruction in using the latest equipment and carrying out treatment last year at the hospital. According to Hung, this engagement is important as it strengthens connections between front-line personnel in both countries, as well as better positions Taiwan to attract some of the 120,000 to 150,000 people of Myanmar traveling abroad for health checkups and other services per annum.

"Taiwan enjoys a reputation for high-quality services at a reasonable cost," Hung said. "This advantage, along with the government's easing of visa requirements for nationals from the region, puts the country in the driver's seat." According to the MOHW, 157,000 patients from NSP target countries visited Taiwan for treatment in 2018, up 52 percent from the year before.

OCOC is seen by Minister Chen as Taiwan's ticket for internationalizing local health care services. "Public and private resources are invested in ensuring the success of the initiative," he said. "This is a serious commitment that helps people lead healthier lives and powerfully projects the country's soft power." ■



New Lease on Life

Treatment at a hospital in Taiwan made all the difference for Theodore D. Nelson.

BY MEG CHANG

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHINA MEDICAL UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL



01. Theodore D. Nelson, right, and his family discuss the treatment plan with Dr. Chen Hsien-te during his first visit to China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan's Taichung City in April 2019.

02. Dr. Chen, right, uses an advanced O-arm imaging system during Nelson's spinal surgery at CMUH.

03. Nelson, flanked by his family and CMUH medical staffers, celebrates his successful hip replacement surgeries.

04. Nelson, center, enjoys fishing with his friends in Guam.

Taiwan hospitals are increasingly adopting advanced surgical procedures that can enhance quality of life for patients with serious conditions.

The upgraded techniques and equipment are drawing plenty of interest from abroad, with Taiwan becoming a go-to location for foreign nationals seeking top-quality care.

Providing evidence of how Taiwan Can Help realize Health For All is the story of Theodore D. Nelson, who received treatment at China Medical University Hospital (CMUH) in the central city of Taichung. Previously an assistant professor at University of Guam in the south Pacific territory, Nelson hurt his back while teaching a basketball youth development program.

The injury came as a shock to Nelson's family and friends, who knew him as a man capable of lifting fifty-gallon drums of water. "Before the accident I was really active. I



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loved the outdoors, fishing, free diving, hiking and hunting." The injury changed everything, as his back steadily deteriorated over nine years until it affected his hips and knees.

In addition to limiting his mobility, the constant pain left Nelson tossing and turning at night. "I might sleep well for 20 or 30 minutes, but I'd always wake up in pain." After several rounds of surgery, including procedures in Hawaii, Nelson was still unable to walk without crutches.

"I couldn't do 90 percent of the things I wanted to do," he said. "It got really scary because I was hunching over and unable to straighten my back."

Nelson gained a new lease on life in late 2018 when he learned of potential treatment options at CMUH from Fong S. Wu (吳宏聲), a committee advisor to Taiwan's Overseas Chinese Affairs Council who has lived in Guam for many years. At first Nelson was hesitant, unsure whether the treatment would be covered by his insurance plan, but CMUH was quick to address his concerns.

According to Aichi Chou (周艾齊), chief executive officer of CMUH's International Medical

Center, the hospital quickly contacted Nelson's insurance provider to iron out the details. "We've been in the Guam market since 2016, so it was no trouble making all the necessary arrangements," she said.

Dr. Chen Hsien-te (陳賢德), director of the CMUH Spine Center, said Nelson arrived at the hospital in a wheelchair looking pained and dispirited. "He originally came for spinal surgery, but after extensive examination we strongly recommended hip replacements first, as his joints were severely deformed."

In accordance with the treatment plan proposed by Dr. Chen, Nelson underwent two hip surgeries in May 2019. "He knew the procedures had been successful because he was mostly pain free and could walk with a mobility aid just two days after," Dr. Chen said. Nelson returned home for three months of recuperation before going back to the hospital for a spine operation in August the same year.

While the success of Nelson's surgeries owes much to the expertise of CMUH staffers and state-of-the-art equipment like the O-arm surgical imaging system, Dr. Chen said the trust built between patient and

medical team lay at the heart of the happy outcome.

Surgery can be a taxing experience both physically and mentally. It was therefore crucial to keep Nelson fully abreast of developments at every stage of treatment, Dr. Chen said, adding that CMUH makes a special effort to instill positive energy in its patients to help them through the difficult times.

This approach clearly paid off for Nelson. During a press conference organized by CMUH at the Hyatt Regency Guam in late 2019, the Guamanian described his experience as a blessing. "I can finally sleep after nine years. I feel so much better now."

Stephanie, Nelson's wife, also thinks the treatment has been a game changer. "Honestly I'm just grateful I don't have to listen to him moaning and groaning," she said with a smile. "Now his quality of life is much better, and he can enjoy his retirement."

Rehabilitation is going well for Nelson back in Guam, and while he still walks with a cane, he can fish with his friends again. "If I need any more treatment, I'm definitely going back to Taiwan. I won't go anywhere else." ■



Borderless Care

Taiwan honors the World Health Organization's promise to Leave No One Behind.

For nearly six decades, Taiwan has been providing public health assistance to its allies and like-minded partners through cooperation projects, donations and medical missions. Initially organized by state-backed International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF), this relief is now also administered by many of the country's hospitals and nongovernmental organizations (NGO).

New Taipei City-based Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps is one such example, organizing missions sending health care professionals to communities in 48 countries and territories since its establishment in 1995. Another is Changhua Christian Hospital (CCH), headquartered in the central Taiwan county, which has sent 90 missions to 18 countries and territories since its first overseas project in 2004. Currently, CCH is working with the Thailand government on a 10-year project using the latest information and communication technology to upgrade the country's medical systems.

Many hospitals in Taiwan also welcome patients from abroad in need of expert medical procedures. In April 2019, after seven months of surgical treatment at China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan's Taichung City, an 11-year-old girl from Myanmar with Goldenhar syndrome happily returned home with her eyesight restored and ear reconstructed.

As a responsible member of the international community, Taiwan will continue to help those in need. After all, health care is beyond borders and politics. ■

—by Jim Hwang



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01 – 03. Taiwan is donating much-needed medical supplies to its allies and like-minded partners around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic.

01 – 03. Photos by Chen Mei-ling



- 01. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Kiribati, 2019
- 02. Tzu Chi Hospital, Mozambique, 2019
- 03. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Myanmar, 2018

01 & 03. Courtesy of MacKay Memorial Hospital
02. Courtesy of Wang Zhong-yi, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation





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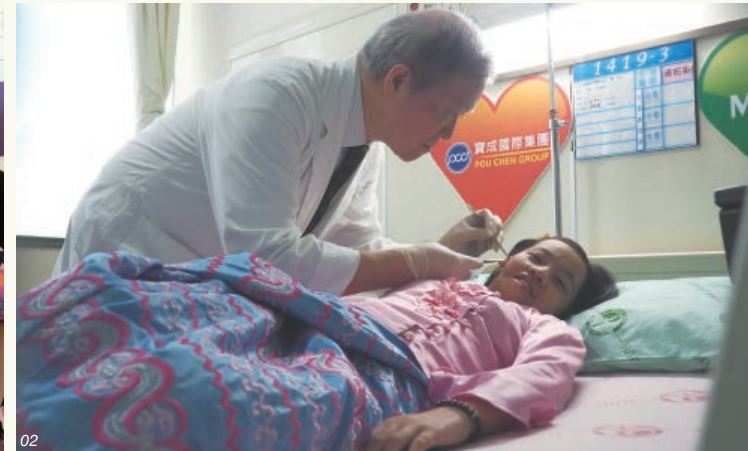
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01. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Cambodia, 2017
 02 & 05. Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps, Philippines, 2019
 03. Tzu Chi Hospital, Mozambique, 2019
 04. A physician from Vietnam, right, observes an operation at Changhua Christian Hospital in the central Taiwan county, 2019.
 06. A therapist from India, left, practices burn care at Taipei City's Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation, 2019.

01. Courtesy of MacKay Memorial Hospital
 02 & 05. Courtesy of Taiwan Root Medical Peace Corps
 03. Courtesy of Tsai Kai-fan, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation
 04. Courtesy of Changhua Christian Hospital
 06. Courtesy of Sunshine Social Welfare Foundation



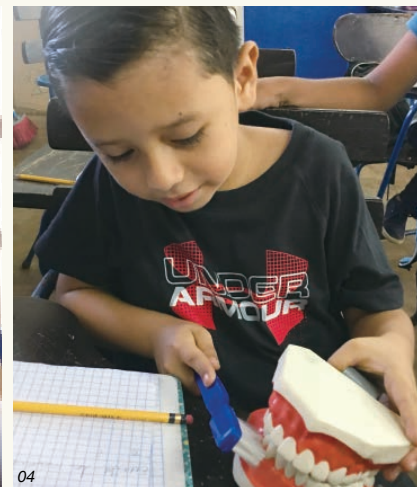
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01. Chi Mei Medical Service, Vietnam, 2019
02. A girl from Myanmar is treated for Goldenhar syndrome at China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan's Taichung City, 2019.
03. CCH, India, 2019
04. International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF), Nicaragua, 2019
05. CCH, Vietnam, 2014
06. MacKay Memorial Hospital, Kiribati, 2019
07. Tzu Chi Hospital, Mozambique, 2019

01. Courtesy of Chi Mei Medical Center
02. Courtesy of China Medical University Hospital
- 03 & 05. Courtesy of CCH
04. Courtesy of Chang Shu-hui
06. Courtesy of MacKay Memorial Hospital
07. Courtesy of Wang Zhong-yi, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation



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**Health
for All**



Taiwan

Can Help



Looking Up Again