



Taipei Medical University

gears up for medical tourism

Professor Wen-Ta Chiu points out that the current shift from a patient-centered healthcare system to a consumer-centered system creates new opportunities for leading academic medical centers

By Dimitri Bruyas
and Lana Wu
Discover Taiwan

1. Over the last 50 years, Taipei Medical University has offered medical education through seven colleges to more than 30,000 students.
2. Professor Wen-Ta Chiu, president of Taipei Medical University, notes that TMU's medical centers are accredited by the U.S.-based Joint Commission International (JCI) as international medical facilities outside the United States.
3. Professor Chiu, right, and professor Scott S. Cowen, president of Tulane University, USA, attend their sister school signing ceremony.
4. Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, 2008 Nobel Prize Winner, is welcomed by professor Chiu, during her recent visit at TMU.

— Akie Ang, Discover Taiwan, Taipei Medical University



If you have ever experienced the medical facilities in Taiwan, you can attest to their impressive level of service and equipment. Both the private sector and the government devote billions of dollars each year to develop one of the world's most comprehensive healthcare systems in the world.

With the sustained growth in the number of medical providers, quality standards have become all more important, especially for leading academic medical centers such as Taipei Medical University (臺北醫學大學, TMU) and its affiliated hospitals — Taipei Medical University Hospital (臺北醫學大學附設醫院), Shuang-Ho Hospital (雙和醫院) and Wan Fang Medical Center (萬芳醫學中心).

“The (JCI) accreditation system ensures that our hospitals maintain excellent personnel, facilities, instruments and services, as well as the highest safety standards.”

— Professor Wen-Ta Chiu (邱文達), president of Taipei Medical University

“The accreditation system ensures that our hospitals maintain excellent personnel, facilities, instruments and services, as well as the highest safety standards,” TMU President Wen-Ta Chiu (邱文達) told Discover Taiwan.

“Our affiliated hospitals have also received numerous awards, like Shuang-Ho Hospital, which has been recognized as a successful Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) project, winning Taiwan's Golden Thumb Award,” he added.

To further demonstrate such commitment towards quality on the international stage, the university's president stressed that TMU's medical centers are accredited by the U.S.-based Joint Commission International (JCI) as international medical facilities outside the United States.

With regards to medical tourism, JCI accreditation provides a visible commitment



to improve the quality of medical care; it ensures a safe environment and demonstrates the hospitals' continuous efforts to reduce risks to patients and staff.

The accreditation further makes sure that hospitals have state-of-the-art healthcare facilities and technology, along with advanced medical standards and protocols, professionalism and quality of their doctors.

“We rely on medical tourism to learn about new medical cultures, as well as allowing our staff to have a more global perspective,” said Chiu, who is also an accomplished neurosurgeon.

“In this global world, we must understand the various health situations in other countries and how to battle those diseases,” he added.

In recent years, the continuous rise in healthcare costs has shifted responsibility for payments to patients, who are seeking for less expensive alternatives. The resulting shift from a patient-centered system to a consumer-centered system creates new opportunities for top academic medical centers, like TMU's affiliated hospitals.

Asked about Taiwan's potential in the medical tourism industry, Chiu remarked that contrary to India, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, which are all English-speaking countries, some of the staff at Taiwanese hospitals cannot express themselves fluently in English

Besides, Taiwanese legislation aims at lowering the cost of healthcare and takes into consideration that if foreign patients come in great numbers to the island, local hospitals would discriminate in favor of foreigners. In other words, “local legislation aims at fair medical treatment between local and foreign patients,” he pointed out.

As for prospects of Chinese patients seeking medical treatment in Taiwan, Chiu noted that China is “a good opportunity as well as a challenge.”

“Seven (Taiwanese) hospitals already went to China to build medical centers, but some of them have encountered a lot of difficulties,” he stressed.

On the one hand, Chiu believes that mainland Chinese don't understand Taiwan's medical culture. “They don't know about the quality of services that Taiwan's professionals can provide.”

But thanks to JCI accreditation and other local certifications, he expressed hopes that a growing number of Chinese patients would travel across the Taiwan Strait for medical treatment, rather than going to Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea or Japan.

After all, if we define medical tourism as provision of “cost effective” private medical care for foreign patients needing surgical and other forms of specialized treatment, TMU and its three affiliated hospitals are at the forefront of Taiwan's healthcare industry.

Over the last 50 years, the top academic center has offered medical education through seven colleges — College of Medicine, College of Oral Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Nursing, College of Public Health and Nutrition, College of Medical Science and Technology, and College of Humanities and Social Sciences — to more than 30,000 students. Currently, the TMU family encompasses nearly 6,000 students, 400 full-time faculty members, and 600 part-time faculty members. ■

臺北醫學大學
Taipei Medical University
Tel: +886-2-2736-1661 ext. 2695
<http://healthcare.tmu.edu.tw>



1. Taipei Medical University Hospital, located in the capital's affluent Xinyi district, is treating more and more patients from abroad.
2. Experts agree that the cost of surgery in Taiwan is one of the lowest in the world.
3. Professor Fei-Peng Lee, superintendent of Taipei Medical University Hospital, remarks that the Chinese's perception of "medical services" has been changing gradually.
4. A doctor shows a medical image taken by the hospital's latest Breast MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machine. As soon as a new medical device is available on the international market, the TMUH strives to acquire it.

— Akie Ang, Discover Taiwan, Taipei Medical University Hospital

Taipei Medical University Hospital takes the lead in hi-tech healthcare

As one of the leading JCI accredited hospitals in Taiwan's healthcare industry, it is not surprising that the Taipei Medical University Hospital attracts a growing number of medical tourists, who want to apply for reimbursement from their healthcare provider

By Dimitri Bruyas and Lana Wu
Discover Taiwan

Healthcare is one of the most rapidly growing sectors of Taiwan's economy, with per capita spending in 2009 estimated at NT\$33,187, and total healthcare expenditure accounting for around 6.6 percent of GDP.

According to the Cabinet-level Department of Health (行政院衛生署), the proportion of national income spent on healthcare will keep on rising in the upcoming years, though the government will maintain pressure on private medical facilities on drug prices and healthcare costs. No wonder top medical centers have turned to medical tourism for a shot in the arm — so to speak!

"The cost of medical treatment in Taiwan is one of the lowest rate in the world, despite the island's well-established reputation for quality medical care," said professor Fei-Peng Lee (李飛鵬), superintendent of Taipei Medical University Hospital (臺北醫學大學附設醫院, TMUH). "So how could we be less competitive?"

Medical experts agree that the equipment of Taiwanese hospitals is at the forefront of the hi-tech medical care industry. As soon as a new medical device is available on the international market, the TMUH strives to acquire it. In recent months, the hospital has invested in the latest Computerized Axial Tomography

“ Taiwanese believe that medical care is a service industry, like the catering and hotel industries. This makes our hospitals even more attractive than other medical institutions in mainland China. ”

— Professor Fei-Peng Lee (李飛鵬), superintendent of Taipei Medical University Hospital



scan (CT scan) and Cardiac Catheterization Imaging Systems.

"Whether it is a PET Scan (Positron Emission Tomography), MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging), VCT (Volume Computed Tomography), Breast MRI, or the facilities within the Post-natal Care Center, Health Management Center and Medical Cosmetic Center, (most people) are impressed at seeing this equipment in our hospital," Lee remarked.

As one of the leading hospitals in Taiwan's medical care industry, it is not surprising that a growing number of foreigners consult doctors at the TMUH each year, including government officials from some of the island's diplomatic allies.

In March 2010, H. M. Ntombi Thwala, queen mother of the Kingdom of Swaziland, had a medical examination at the TMUH during her seven-day-long fact-finding mission on Taiwan's economic development.

Also, up to 20 groups from mainland China have visited the TMUH so far this year, including some Chinese officials hoping to build top-notch medical facilities on the continent with the help of Taiwan's expertise.

"Because of our common cultural background, it is easier to attract overseas and mainland Chinese (to come to Taiwan) for medical treatment," Lee said, adding that local delicacies, as well as quality transportation and accommodation are making the trip to Taipei even more attractive.

As the quality of Chinese medical services has yet to reach the level of Taiwanese medical facilities, the superintendent remarked that the Chinese's perception of



"medical services" has been changing gradually.

"Taiwanese believe that medical care is a service industry, like the catering and hotel industries," he went on. "This makes our hospitals even more attractive than other medical institutions in mainland China."

Located in Taipei's upscale Xinyi District, the TMUH was established in 1976 as an outpatient service center with 220 beds. With the steady growth of the number of patients, a second and then a third medical building were built, with a total of 800 beds, to provide a better healthcare environment in the eastern part of the city and live up to the hospital's promises of "placing people first and providing holistic services to the public."

"We are a university hospital that shares talents, advanced medical equipment and accomplished professors. At the same time, in order to develop medical tourism, we have received the accreditation of the Joint Commission International (JCI)," he explained.

Such certification is of prime importance for foreign medical tourists who want to apply for reimbursement from their health care provider, especially when they have an emergency



operation in a foreign country, like Channa Eshett, 71.

The American grandmother experienced earlier this year the expertise of the TMUH's doctors, when they efficiently removed from her body a giant gallstone, around 2 centimeters in diameter, four to six times the diameter of ordinary gallstones.

Eshett and her husband were aboard the Ocean Princess Liner for a voyage to Asia; she was diagnosed with cholecystitis, an inflammation of the gall bladder, after receiving medical treatment in Hong Kong.

"When the cruise liner anchored at the Keelung Harbor, she was rushed to the TMUH for examination and then underwent surgery to remove her gallstone, thanks to the hospital's reputation and JCI accreditation," noted Lee, who is also an accomplished surgeon.

Asked about the TMUH's future plans of development, he unveiled that the hospital is planning a new Cancer Treatment Center. Why? "Because to treat cancer patients, you need to be able to coordinate various key medical skills, such as surgery, chemotherapy and the latest medical imaging systems," pointed out the superintendent, while highlighting the TMUH's vision of "integrated medical care." ■

臺北醫學大學附設醫院
Taipei Medical University Hospital
Tel: +886-2-2737-2181 ext. 3335, 3336
www.tmu.org.tw



Wan Fang Medical Center highlights Taiwan's quality medical care

With the medical tourism industry soaring to new heights, Taiwan's Wan Fang Medical Center looks to provide top-notch medical consultations and service for all patients that are looking for any kind of medical care

By Dimitri Bruyas and Lana Wu
Discover Taiwan

While Taiwan is seeking to become a global center for healthcare in the Asia Pacific Region, Wan Fang Medical Center (萬芳醫學中心) has remained a focus of public attention with its high-quality and reasonably priced medical services.

The academic medical center, conveniently located along Taipei's Mass Rapid Transit system (MRT), is the island's first publicly owned, but privately operated hospital by Taipei Medical University (臺北醫學大學).

Still, it is internationally known for neurosurgery, cardiology, orthopedics, cancer treatment and laser cosmetic surgery, thanks to its 320 physicians and surgeons trained at some of the leading medical universities worldwide.

According to recent figures, more than 1.2 million patients seek medical treatment at the hospital each year, including nearly 8,000 for-



In Taiwan, medical treatment is accessible to all. Here you see me or another physician; it is the same."

— noted cardiologist Chuang-Ye Hong (洪傳岳), superintendent of Taipei Medical University's Wan Fang Medical Center

eigners from nearby Asian countries such as Japan, China and Korea, inquiring about Botox injections, microinvasive surgery, cardiac catheterization, stenting and joint replacement, among other procedures.

"Affordable quality is our best asset," professor Chuang-Ye Hong (洪傳岳), superintendent

of Wan Fang Medical Center, told Discover Taiwan on Sep. 28.

Compared to other privately-owned institutions across the island, Hong pointed out that the hospital's most valuable quality is the ability to provide high-quality medical care for a fair price.

"Because our prices are controlled by the city government — as you know, this building belongs to the city government — what we charge for medical treatment is comparable to other public city hospitals," he said.

"In other (privately-owned) hospitals, there aren't any such restrictions," he added.

Despite such financial constraints, Wan Fang Medical Center was awarded ISO 9002, ISO 22000, ISO 14001 and QM 9004 international quality certifications, and received Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation. These accreditations assess health care organizations to determine if they meet a set of



1. Professor Chuang-Ye Hong, superintendent of Wan Fang Medical Center, remarks that leading Taiwanese hospitals can provide high quality medical services at reasonable prices.

2. Located on the rooftop, the Wan Fang garden provides patients a holistic approach to healing.

3. A patient is prepared for Cyberknife surgery. Taiwan is at the forefront of medical technology.

4. The design and style of the hospital's rooms allow foreign patients to feel at home and secluded from the public.

5. Wan Fang Medical Center prides itself on its personable manner towards its patients and their needs.

— Akie Ang, Discover Taiwan, Wan Fang Medical Center



international standards designed to improve quality of care.

"Since the hospital was established in 1997, we have been taking the challenge of external accreditation and evaluation," remarked Hong. "By doing so, we have been able to increase the quality (of our services)."

In fact, Wan Fang Medical Center was the first medical center in Taiwan to receive JCI accreditation in 2006, and was re-accredited last year. So far, only about 10 hospitals in Taiwan have been accredited.

"This means that we are among the leading hospitals in Taiwan with an international level of quality control," the superintendent said.

With regards to quality care, Hong further emphasized that Wan Fang Medical Center has a very friendly environment, where the patient's needs are taken care of "very seriously."

The Wan Fang garden, for instance, located on the hospital's rooftop, provides a holistic healing approach to cancer and terminally ill patients. It is not only a garden, where patients

can wander any time, but also an open space where they can focus their attention on cultivating plants, flowers and fruit, and try to heal psychologically, too.

Contrary to all expectations, the seasoned medical expert noted that the Asia Pacific Region is lacking such medical facilities. Although there are some very good hospitals in mainland China, he remarked that those Chinese medical centers usually charge international patients a hefty price for healthcare.

"In Taiwan, medical treatment is accessible to all. Here, whether you see me or another physician; it is the same charge," said Hong, who is also a noted cardiologist.

Asked about the market potential of medical tourism in Taiwan, he remarked that there might be some limitations for patients from the United States and Europe to travel to Taiwan for medical treatment. "But for Chinese patients, we see huge market potential in the (growing) interaction between Taiwan and mainland China," he explained.

Without a doubt, Wan Fang Medical Center not only offers 758 beds of quality medical services at an attractive price, but also provides a well-disposed environment, free from any language barriers, for ethnic Chinese people seeking quality medical care.

The recent signing of the economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) further creates a huge medical tourism opportunity for Chinese people. According to data from the Department of Health (DOH), hundreds of Chinese people have been visiting Taiwan on a tourist visa for medical purposes.

"We cannot wait for another ten years," concluded Hong, while hoping that government authorities in Taipei and Beijing will soon lift the remaining restrictions hampering medical travel across the Taiwan Strait. ■

臺北醫學大學 - 萬芳醫學中心
Taipei Medical University - Wan Fang Medical Center
Tel: +886-2-2930-7930 ext. 7766
www.taiwanhealthcare.com



Shuang-Ho Hospital

cares for Taipei County's residents and beyond

With 30 clinical departments, the new medical facility is a regional center for critical care and medical services for local and foreign patients alike

By Dimitri Bruyas
and Lana Wu

Discover Taiwan

While the demand for quality healthcare in Taiwan is growing rapidly, there has long been a serious and conspicuous mismatch between demand for and supply of healthcare infrastructure and services in northern Taipei County.

For residents living in one of the most populous areas in Taiwan, this imbalance was only likely to get worse, until the Cabinet-level Department of Health (行政院衛生署) commissioned Taipei Medical University (臺北醫學大學) to build, operate and manage Shuang-Ho Hospital (雙和醫院).

Opened in July 2008, the modern medical center has since been working closely with Taipei Medical University Hospital (臺北醫學

大學附設醫院, TMUH) and Taipei Medical University's Wan Fang Medical Center (萬芳醫學中心) to form a triangular healthcare structure in the greater Taipei area with a total capacity of more than 3,000 beds.

"(Prior to the opening), the average bed (ratio) per 10,000 people living around Zhonghe City (中和市) was less than seven, compared to 32 around the island, and 82 in Taipei City," remarked professor Chih-Hsiung Wu (吳志雄), superintendent of Shuang-Ho Hospital.

The above facts underlined the urgent need for health authorities to ramp up investments and resources towards improving healthcare infrastructure.

With a capacity of 1,574 beds for inpatients, 30 clinical departments for outpatients and an emergency ambulance helipad on the rooftop — the first for medical use in Taipei County — Shuang-Ho Hospital has since become a regional center for critical care and medical services for local and foreign patients alike.

Drawing from his experience as the former superintendent of TMUH, Wu, a renowned surgeon, stressed how his policies successfully raised not only the hospital's occupancy rate from 60 percent to 90 percent, but also the medical skills of surgeons and nurses.

In fact, a hospital is only "a building," unless it is operated "by good doctors, good



1. Experimental cutting-edge treatment facilities and medical technologies have been flown in from across the world to meet the needs of any patient.
2. Professor Chih-Hsiung Wu, superintendent of Shuang-Ho Hospital, explains how he successfully raised not only the hospital's occupancy rate from 60 percent to 90 percent, but the medical skills of surgeons and nurses as well.
3. Opened in 2008, Shuang-Ho Hospital was designed to give a modern and strong impression on patients.
4. The well-trained staff at Shuang-Ho Hospital's Health Management Center is actively researching and developing new methods in one of the most innovative fields of study.

— Akie Ang, Discover Taiwan, Courtesy of Shuang-Ho Hospital



“Because it is a new health facility, all our focus has been on serving the patients' needs ... But because it is a medical university hospital, we also need to do research and teaching.”

— Professor Chih-Hsiung Wu (吳志雄),
superintendent of Shuang-Ho Hospital

nurses and good staff," Wu pointed out.

During his seven years at the helm of the city's top medical center, such critical skills often came to a test, like when Alberto Zaffaroni was brought back from the brink of death, following a workplace accident in 2007.

The 47-year-old Italian engineer was hit on the head by a falling 350-kg pillar while he was installing a machine in a factory in northern Taiwan's Taoyuan County. The accident broke Zaffaroni's skull, for which he underwent two separate rounds of brain surgery at TMUH.

Thanks to the surgeons' outstanding skills — 85 percent of injuries such as his are fatal — the engineer eventually recovered and came back to Taiwan in 2008 to visit his doctors before attending a marathon in Italy.

"Because (Shuang-Ho Hospital) is a new health facility, all our focus has been on serving the patients' needs ... But because it is a medical university hospital, we also need to do research and teaching," he said.

"I always tell my staff that one-day, when they retire, they have to become professors because they are working for a university," he added. "You have access to the students; you are connected to good basic scientists; so, you have to conduct basic studies in this hospital."

With such innovative policies, it is little wonder that several big names in the medical research field have been practicing at Shuang-Ho Hospital and developing new protocols for

medical checkup, obesity surgery, joint replacement and open heart surgery.

As the academic medical center has also received Joint Commission International (JCI) certification, the superintendent noted that Taiwan has a lot of potential in the medical tourism industry, especially for ethnic Chinese people residing all across Asia.

"Our medicine is strong enough," Wu went on. "It is comparable with what you have in the United States, India, Singapore and Thailand."

If you want to get an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) in Hong Kong, you usually have to wait between one and two months, but not in Taiwan.

"Even for medical checkups, it is OK for Hong Kong people to come here and have a tour. Everything is the same and you even save money," he concluded. ■

臺北醫學大學 - 署立雙和醫院
Taipei Medical University -
Shuang Ho Hospital
Tel: +886-2-2249-0088 ext. 8805, 8807
<http://eng.shh.org.tw/>