

PLEDGING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE IN MYANMAR

Did you know in Myanmar road traffic accidents result in more fatalities of children than malaria, HIV/AIDS, or diarrhoea?

PHILLIP CARSON
Chair, Global Health

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) and the Foundation for Surgery are working hard to address this through strategic partnerships and ‘training the trainers’.

The capacity building program in Myanmar was initiated in 2009 following the Cyclone Nargis tragedy that resulted in 138,000 fatalities and another million people homeless. Today, the program is conducted in partnership with the Universities of Medicine with the approval and support of the Ministry of Health of the Union Republic of Myanmar, and funding support from the Kimberley Foundation through the Peter F. Williams AO International Surgery Grant.

In April 2016, the then President Professor David Watters visited Myanmar where he met with specialist leaders including the Rectors of the University of Medicine 1 (UM1) and University of Medicine 2 in Yangon, the Rector of the University of Medicine, Mandalay and senior specialists of the Universities’ Teaching Hospitals.

In 2015 RACS signed formal agreements with the UM1 and University of Medicine, Mandalay to cover the training activities including license agreements to adapt RACS-owned Skills Courses for use in the Myanmar environment. In April, Professor Watters signed the agreement with the University of Medicine 2, completing the triad of formal agreements with the major medical training faculties of Myanmar.

The approach to ‘training the trainers’ in Myanmar had been established initially through the Rowan Nicks Scholarship. However, it was the initiation of the Primary Trauma Care (PTC) program and the sustained effort by the RACS-supported international faculty that led to the invitation by the Minister of Health in 2011 to help develop Emergency Medicine (EM) in Myanmar.

Since 2009 the Program has trained over 1500 national Primary Trauma Care providers to deliver frontline basic trauma care. More than 200 have been trained as instructors to teach the course, and 22 have received higher level,



David Watters visiting an Emergency Department in Myanmar leadership training to supervise the instructor courses locally with external support.

The establishment of a sustainable local PTC Foundation to provide regular courses for the needs of both the primary care physicians and all the postgraduate trainees in the next two to three years will be the cornerstone in the transition of PTC training in Myanmar to national ownership and independence.

The RACS has completed its initial commitment to help the Myanmar Ministry of Health develop a sustainable emergency medicine training program through the University of Medicine 1. Since 2012, 26 national doctors have graduated with Post Graduate Diplomas in Emergency Medicine.

Today these graduates provide emergency care in Yangon, Mandalay and the new capital Nay Pyi Taw, and are conducting the national emergency medicine training independently, with minimal external support.

During his stay, Professor Watters visited the Emergency Departments at Yangon General, Nay Pyi Taw and Mandalay General Hospitals, addressed the Myanmar senior surgeons and surgical trainees on the issue of “access to safe and affordable surgical and anaesthesia care” and witnessed first-hand the impact of and progress made as a result of the RACS-supported Emergency Medicine Development Program.



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Professor Watters commented on the advances of the program: “I am most impressed with all the work going on to support Surgical Training in Myanmar.”

I am also impressed with the vision and efforts of the local faculties and their determination to succeed.”

Professor Watters highlighted that two scholars from Myanmar, Hepatobiliary surgeon Professor Tin Tin Mar and Orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Myat Lwin, the inaugural recipients of the Myanmar Scholarship were undertaking a program of hospital visits in Australia and New Zealand this year.

The Scholarship Program was established by RACS with funding support by the Foundation for Surgery and the UM1. Professor Watters stressed the need to expand the corpus in order that more recipients may benefit.

As part of the national drive to expedite training of specialist providers, the Myanmar Universities have recently embarked on a number of new initiatives, including sub-specialty as well as diploma training. The previous approach of completing a ‘general surgery’ masters before embarking on sub-specialty is to be curtailed.

The year 2016 is to be the first of direct subspecialty MMed Sc training in Myanmar, and there is significant interest in receiving support from RACS and relevant specialty societies, specifically in Paediatric, Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery, Neurosurgery and Urology. RACS Global Health

is exploring how these areas can be supported to ensure more children, families and communities can have access to safe surgery when they need it.

Background

Following the military coup d’etat in 1962, a succession of military dictatorships has kept Myanmar’s development struggling significantly behind its neighbours. The election of 2010 led to the government of President U Thein Sein, which brought major changes.

For instance, the cost of a SIM card reduced from US \$3000 to \$1.50 and the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was rescinded. She, together with several members of her party, the National League of Democracy was elected to the National Parliament soon after and in November 2015 won the election.

The party is taking office after a landslide election victory, transitioning the country into a (mainly) civilian democratic government, the first in a long time.



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Road traffic accidents are increasing dramatically in Myanmar and these accidents disproportionately affect children and result in more fatalities than malaria, HIV/AIDS, or diarrhoea. This end of financial year please Pledge-a-Procedure and give a one-off donation to ensure children, families and communities in Myanmar can access the vital assistance they need, when they need it most.

100 per cent of all donations assist in addressing critical surgical needs in Myanmar. All costs for administering the Foundation for Surgery are provided for with thanks to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons so that every dollar of your donation can go where it is needed most.

So much has already been done with your generous support but this May and June we need your help to continue and expand the delivery of these essential activities in Myanmar. Without adequate funding, the Myanmar program will not be able to continue providing a full range of essential services to meet the urgent needs of families and children as well as the longer term needs of communities.

Donating is very simple: please go to <https://www.surgeons.org/foundation/> to donate and gain an immediate tax receipt.

This simple act will have an enormous impact on our work, the Myanmar program and our ability to have a positive impact.