



Emergency Medicine for Myanmar

A collaboration between Colleges helps Myanmar healthcare grow

Health authorities in Myanmar have requested international expertise and input to develop emergency medicine skills and systems in the lead up to the South East Asian Games to be held there in 2013.

In response, the College Council has approved a proposal by the International Committee for the RACS to work in collaboration with the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM) and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists to provide initial training later this year.

The College's new involvement in emergency medicine builds on the successful provision and delivery of 19 Primary Trauma Care (PTC) courses to Myanmar medical staff following the devastation wrought by Cyclone Nargis in 2008.

Professor David Watters, a College Councillor and Chairman of the International Committee and External Affairs, represented the RACS at the Myanmar Medical Association meeting held in January where the request for international assistance was made at an Emergency Medicine workshop opened by the Deputy Minister for Health.

He said the request represented a golden opportunity to help develop healthcare in a country that has no emergency medicine specialty and where the vast majority of the population live on only \$1 a day.

He said the College would seek AusAID funding to support the training program with financial support also being provided through the RACS Foundation.

"Myanmar has a population of 59 million yet there is no specialty of emergency medicine, no training and no specialty position in any hospital which is quite typical of a developing nation given that the specialty is relatively young, even in countries like Australia," Professor Watters said.

More than trauma

"Yet we believe the College can help in the development of emergency medicine as a natural progression from the provision of the PTC courses which began in 2009.

"That program, which was designed to train the trainers, has been extremely successful. So far 130 local faculty members have been trained under international supervision who have, in turn, trained more than 700 other medical staff.

"We believe we can use this collaborative platform to expand our role in teaching the skills of emergency medicine."

Professor Watters said the aim of the training would not simply focus on trauma, but would cover heart attacks, snake bites, burns and strokes.

He said it had now been decided to offer a five-day induction course to be held in June which would include

a component on emergency surgery with the Myanmar Medical Association selecting suitable candidates in May.

"We are now planning the provision of a range of courses in collaboration with the colleges involved including the ATLS course, the EMST course and the Management of Emergency Surgery (MOSES) Course," Professor Watters said.

"I also envisage the provision of an Early Management of Severe Burns course, a course on the emergency treatment for snake bite and a Paediatric Life Support course.

"Some of these will be provided by Australasian specialists and some by Fellows from Hong Kong.

"The Myanmar Medical Association and Health Authorities are also planning to introduce a Master of Medical Science degree in Emergency Medicine by 2014.

"This too will require international input because providing the course will require the services of visiting surgeons and specialists to teach and support students until Myanmar has trained its own faculty."

Professor Watters said the roll-out of emergency medicine training would occur in phases with an initial focus on providing senior hospital staff with the skills to run an emergency department followed by the training of family doctors and rural specialists.

He said that while the Foundation for



Surgery had raised funds to support the PTC courses in Myanmar, extra financial support would be needed if the emergency medicine collaboration was to have a swift and effective impact.

Coordinated response

"While at the conference in January we had a promising meeting with the Australian Ambassador, Ms Bronte Moules, and I believe that if we were able to obtain Australian government funding the College could offer a more coordinated and larger response to Myanmar's needs with regard to emergency patient care and emergency medicine," he said.

Professor Watters said the international push to develop the specialty was being led by Mr Tai Wai Wong, an emergency medicine specialist from Hong Kong, Mr James Kong, a RACS Fellow and PTC Project Director, Professor Peter Cameron, President of the International Federation of Emergency Medicine from Melbourne, Dr Steven Swallow, an Anaesthetist from Hobart, and himself.

He said Professor Zaw Wai Soe, the local orthopaedic surgeon and traumatologist leading much of the emergency medicine development, had strong ties with Australasian Fellows following a 2011 visit to Melbourne and Sydney emergency departments which was supported by

the Surgeons International fund.

He said the RACS had chosen to lead the collaborative project because it was the only College to have a dedicated International Development department and because of the interest and commitment expressed by a number of Fellows wishing to help develop surgery and quality health care in Myanmar.

"A number of Fellows have gladly offered their skills and time over recent years to provide the PTC courses and that contribution has been warmly received by local medical specialists," Professor Watters said.

"The RACS was invited to the annual meeting of the Myanmar Medical Association for the first time last year with Michael Hollands attending on behalf of the President and it was an honour to represent the College at the meeting this year.

"I think if this project to boost emergency medical care gets the necessary financial support it will involve a large number of Fellows providing their skills and expertise over the next ten years.

"Myanmar is now undergoing rapid change as it opens up to the world and this project represents a wonderful opportunity to support local surgeons, doctors and health workers in the development of Emergency Medicine which will be of great and lasting benefit to their people."

With Karen Murphy



Homestay Accommodation for Visiting Scholars

Through the RACS International Scholarships Program and Project China, young surgeons, nurses and other health professionals from developing countries in Asia and the Pacific are provided with training opportunities to visit Australian and New Zealand hospitals. These visits allow the visiting scholars to acquire the knowledge, skills and contacts needed for the promotion of improved health services in their own country, and can range in duration from two weeks to twelve months.

Due to the short term nature of these visits, it is often difficult to find affordable accommodation for visiting scholars. If you have a spare room or suitable accommodation and are interested in helping, please send us your details. We are seeking individuals and families who are able to provide a comfortable and welcoming environment for our overseas scholars in exchange for a modest rental and eternal appreciation.

If you would like to be contacted by the College if the need for accommodation in your area arises, please register your details by contacting the International Scholarships Secretariat on the details below. We are currently seeking accommodation in Melbourne (near Royal Melbourne Hospital and The Alfred), Brisbane (near Princess Alexandra Hospital), Sydney (near Westmead Hospital) and Adelaide (near Royal Adelaide Hospital) for visits in 2012. We would love to hear from you.

International Scholarships Secretariat
 Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, College of Surgeons' Gardens
 250 - 290 Spring St, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
 T: + 61 3 9249 1211
 F: + 61 3 9276 7431
 E: international.scholarships@surgeons.org