

Medical Excellence Japan

BUILDING BRIDGE WITH HEALTHCARE

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JAPAN has been long recognized for its advanced health care system and health technologies. The nation's medical infrastructure has enabled it to have the world's lowest cost of medical care among developed nations, while offering the longest life expectancies and one of the lowest infant mortality rates. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has ranked Japan highly in two fields, technology and diet, which has created two very different points of focus for the foundation of health tourism



An MEJ meeting in Vietnam

and business opportunity.

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has identified precision techniques and technologies, as well as Japan's fame as a quality host, as points of leadership in the medical tourism and trade sector, and set up in 2011 a specialist hospitality and referral entity called Medical Excellence Japan (MEJ). The organization has two roles: to help patients find and access top-level treatments in Japan and to help Japanese medical providers, both in manufacturing and services, to establish businesses abroad

and help promote the export of Japanese know-how and systems.

To give the new entity the horsepower needed to get patients to choose Japan as a treatment place, MEJ recruited one of the nation's top physicians, Dr. Shuzo Yamamoto, a renowned ER trauma specialist, as its president. Dr. Shuzo has impressive qualifications, serving for over 17 years as a leading General Surgeon and Ambulance Medical Instructor at "Kanagawa Traffic Ambulance" inside "Saisei-kai Kanagawa Prefecture Hospital", then after retirement as Honorary Chairman of Japan Hospital Association. Supporting Dr.

Yamamoto at MEJ is the organization's Secretary General, Mr. Hiroshi Asahina.

Today, MEJ is the primary platform for Japanese health providers wanting to deliver health services to non-residents. It helps inbound customers seeking medical treatment to deal with language, scheduling, and accommodation issues, as well as of course recommending trusted providers. Currently, MEJ represents 57 hospitals and more than 21 companies who can take foreign patients or who supply services and technology to providers who do.

What is Japan becoming known for? Primarily its expertise in surgical techniques and advanced technologies, focusing on quality, comprehensive care, minimally invasive procedures, customized medicine, medical checkups, health exams, dentistry, and oral medicine. The new strategy appears to be working well, and already MEJ has helped more than 300 cancer patients from countries as diverse as Russia, China and Cambodia.



Dr. Shuzo Yamamoto, President of MEJ



Patient receiving CT examination in Vladivostok

A second important role for MEJ is to help disseminate Japanese medical expertise abroad. Working with METI to provide funding for hospitals wanting to expand overseas, MEJ assists institutions through their foreign set up procedures, ranging from early stage research through to final construction and implementation. A recent flagship project has been the Hokuto Diagnostic Imaging Center in Vladivostok in Russia, which opened on May 28, 2013. The new center is the brainchild of Hokuto Hospital in Hokkaido, in collaboration with the Stroitel Medical Institute in Vladivostok. Patients there can get MRIs, CTs, and Ultrasound scans, all with equipment made in Japan which is provided by Hitachi Medical Corporation.

It is still early days for Japan's medical tourism, but if MEJ's experience is anything to go by, then METI's plans to have the sector become a major contributor to the nation's trade earnings in the future have a strong chance of becoming reality. Offering high-end techniques and technology not only help the nation add value to its technologies, but also provide advanced solutions for grateful travelers who otherwise would have to go without. **U**