Interview: Hui-Ting Huang – President, Taiwan Adventist Hospital



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Dr. Hui-Ting Huang, President of Taiwan Adventist Hospital, discusses the challenges of long-term care and the role preventive medicine plays within this scope, while also providing insights on running one of the most recognized hospitals in Taiwan and establishing a different business model through health promotion.

Dr. Huang you were appointed as President of the Taiwan Adventist Hospital in 2006. What were the main challenges and milestones ever since you took over the helm of this prestigious hospital?

In 2003, Taiwan's healthcare industry was impacted by the SARS epidemic. The National Insurance Administration decided to cut down the budget for hospitals. Therefore, many hospitals were struggling to survive- 300 hospitals were shut down. Looking back historically, Taiwan Adventist Hospital was in a low point of business at that period. In 2006, when I was appointed as President, my priority was to improve the public image of Taiwan Adventist Hospital. We started by joining the WHO Health Promotion Hospital (HPH) Network (the biggest health promotion network in the world) and promoting preventive medicine – this was our strategy of gaining predominance. We already had outstanding expertise in promoting healthy lifestyle and preventive medicine. However, acute critical care was not our strength as we didn't have experience in that area. All of our efforts were directed to health promotion. It was a different approach as all the other hospitals were focused only on acute treatment while ignoring the importance of preventive medicine. In the following

years we received an important recognition from third parties: ISO27001, ISO9000, BSI 2050, OHSAS and JCI among others. Our main focus can be divided in two categories: preventive medicine promotion and quality care. Over the years, we have invested a lot in the infrastructure to build an excellent reputation in the quality care dimension that we take pride in today.

What is Taiwan Adventist Hospital positioning locally in Taiwan? And on the international scale?

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It is a unique small regional hospital with an excellent reputation for ensuring quality, facility security, patient-centered care and providing excellence in processing. Our main distinction from other medical centers lies in different approach to health that we want to communicate to our patients.

With around 14 percent of its population over 65 years old, a rate expected to reach 25 percent by 2025, Taiwan is undoubtedly an aging society that is rapidly becoming a super-aged society. It is a priority to adapt the way the country manages chronic and complex conditions. To what extent is Taiwan Adventist Hospital leading the way when it comes to elderly and long-term care?

Long-term care is very important; it is a challenge that the government is trying to overcome. Taiwan Adventist Hospital is emphasizing the importance of preventive medicine and active aging-making elderly active can expand life span. Conceptualizing and communicating this message to the elderly can ease the burden of budget and long-term care. Therefore, we are pushing the concept of health literacy as part of the health promotion program. This concept focuses on empowering the patients to manage their health to acknowledge the importance of communication with health professionals and make treatment decisions in a proper way. Unfortunately, the health literacy rate is still very low in Taiwan. Our mission is to raise awareness about the importance of education on treatment topics and making decisions. More importantly, we want to send a message that lifestyle modification and staying active can lead to healthy life in old age.

In the meantime, there is a need to build a more efficient care system that follows a patient-centric model. What does this concept mean to you and how can you translate this concept into tangible measures?

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This year we started to apply the strategy of building the lean hospital. This means we want to provide the highest quality products and deliver them in the shortest period of time. Incorporating this type of concept means eliminating the waste of time, transportation, overproduction or unnecessary surgeries. First step is implementing and strengthening the IT system. The IT system ensures the delivery of proper information on weakness spots. After receiving information, we can find a solution and correct it at the whole system. It can reduce patient waiting times, unnecessary surgeries and raise the efficiency of the hospital. It's a very new concept – we are implementing it top down. Incorporating the lean hospital concept is our mid-term goal. Consequently, we will invest a lot in the IT system in the following two years

Does Taiwan Adventist Hospital play a role in drug research?

We recently started to implement precision medicine into our hospital strategy. However, it is still in the development stage. We have used gene detection tools to make a decision on whether the patient should receive a chemotherapy treatment or not. This is the most common tool we use. Our goal is to broaden the scope of precision medicine for use in drug therapy and for cancer tendency detection.

How do you plan to develop the hospital's research offering?

We have an R&D institutional review board that is in charge of evaluating all the research papers, following the Department of Education and Research. A lot of money is invested into this area – 0.3 percent of our revenues. Apart from that, we encourage doctors, assistants, nurses and technicians to be part of research programs.

You are focusing on internationalization. What are the steps you are taking to make your hospital more internationally recognized?

Taiwan Adventist Hospital is operated by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church which is a worldwide healthcare community. We have decided to focus on the East for many reasons; for example, we collaborate with Guam, Palau, and Saipan. For three years, we have been establishing and maintaining the relationship with local government and Ministry of Health in that area. Our collaboration program is focusing on receiving people from those areas and providing them with appropriate treatment. The Pacific Islands have a high prevalence of diabetes and NCD (non-communicable disease) and we have excellent lifestyle programs for those diseases. Even though the medical expense of transferring patients is high, it is the only option due to lack of doctors in the mentioned areas. Since we are very successful in establishing and maintaining this collaboration, we will focus on moving forward to the eastern world in the future.

What is your competitive advantage?

Quality care and health promotion. We are one of the few hospitals with so many recognitions and we offer a distinct approach to health. Secondly, we are financially profitable – more profitable than many other hospitals. Hospitals' profit rates are usually very low as they depend heavily on the NHI. As NHI policy is constantly changing, hospitals have to scramble to follow. Normally for most hospitals in Taiwan, 80 percent of revenues come from the NHI. This change has had a very low impact on Taiwan Adventist Hospital as 45 percent of our revenue comes from patients and their private insurance. We have signed contracts with 70 insurance companies, which makes this facility very welcoming for foreigners. Finally, we emphasize sustainability – we acquired a gold medal in sustainability in Taiwan which only a few other hospitals possess. As an example of another recognition, I already mentioned we gained a JCI accreditation in 2012 which makes us one of the ten hospitals holding this accreditation. We take pride in social responsibility, very good products, and reaching out to the foreign community. Also, we are environmentally responsible – Taiwan Adventist Hospital is the first hospital in the world to acquire the ISO50001 (good energy management). Our focus is on identifying each process and finding a solution on how to protect the environment.

What is your vision for the Taiwan Adventist Hospital? What do you want to build under your tenure?

We have chosen to follow and establish a different business model. My goal is to build an international hospital. Also, we want to provide quality care, engage people to take care of their health and raise awareness about importance of healthy lifestyle and preventive medicine.

What is your final message?

We want to be recognized as an international hospital emphasizing sustainability, social responsibility and reaching foreign community. Our focus is on consolidating infrastructure, and building comprehensive offering community while being socially and environmentally responsible.

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