

Taiwan's Medical Industry Sets Sights on International Market

Medical tourism is a growing trend worldwide

Equipped with cutting-edge technology and price competitiveness, Taiwan's medical industry is expanding its reach into the international arena, including medical tourism.

Technology-wise, Taiwan's international medical care services are divided into three major categories.

The first category covers simple medical care, including micro medical beauty treatment and physical examinations. Medical beauty treatment involves non-invasive medical practices; with a low technological threshold, this category has attracted the participation of many hospitals.

The second category includes the practice of surgery, including the implantation of artificial joints, organ transplants, and invasive cardiovascular treatment. This category is characterized by low risk and high technology.



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The International Medical Service Center of China Medical University Hospital boasts an experienced medical team and advanced equipment.

China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan, for instance, once undertook a surgery for a female patient with lymphoedema at her right lower limb from Peru, who was diagnosed by a U.S. hospital to have only two years left for her life. Performed by a team consisting of doctors from 15

disciplines, the surgery turned out to be a successful one, converting her right lower limb into one of normal size. She can now walk normally and even dance.

In general, Taiwan's medical treatment is on a par with Singapore's in terms of technology and equipment,



Interior of the International Medical Service Center at China Medical University Hospital



Cooperation between hospitals and hotels can provide patients with one-stop services.

and the island's doctors are capable of undertaking complicated medical procedures such as organ transplants.

The China Medical University Hospital has established an international medical service center with a medical team offering affordable and high-quality medical services including cardiovascular surgery, artificial joint implantation, organ transplants, cosmetic surgery, and integrated traditional Chinese-Western medical treatment.

The Need for Privacy

Patient privacy is integral to medical services. Chen Hung-chi, director of the International Medical Service Center at China Medical University Hospital, notes that the chief executive officer of a U.S. company once sued a Thai hospital for leaking information on his medical treatment, and won the case. Many foreign celebrities and chief executives of listed firms prefer to take medical treatment in foreign countries, such as in Japan, for the sake of privacy. The market potential for such medical treatment is very large.

Privacy is especially important to international medical treatment. Singers and movie stars, for instance, are unlikely to undergo cosmetic surgery at local hospitals and may go to foreign areas with advanced medical technology and equipment, such as Europe or even Taiwan. To tap that market potential, however,

certain measures will have to be implemented, such as the relaxation of visa restrictions.

Backed by 30 years of experience, the International Medical Service Center at China Medical University Hospital has undertaken many cases involving complicated medical procedures, such as the oral cancer of a Southeast Asian patient and the implantation of an artificial penis on a patient from Latin America. The Center can precisely predict and take care of the side effects of cosmetic surgery. It can even provide technological assistance to foreign hospitals in cases where foreign patients cannot come to Taiwan.

The integration of international medical treatment with tourism is a new trend. Cooperation between hospitals and hotels can provide one-stop services that meet all the needs of a foreign patient. A foreign patient undergoing second-category medical treatment in Taiwan, for instance, may be accompanied by three to six relatives or friends, and taking care of those companions can be a lucrative business.

The provision of international medical treatment is unlikely to have immediate financial benefits for a hospital, but can help to upgrade its overall standards. The International Medical Service Center at China Medical University Hospital now



Exterior of China Medical University Hospital in central Taiwan

targets mainly overseas Chinese. Most overseas Chinese patients in Southeast Asia now go to Singapore for medical treatment, but Taiwan is confident that the

high quality and reasonable prices of its medical care will attract growing numbers of them to the island. (PL)

AUO's Revenue Falls to 6-Quarter Low in Q1

AU Optronics Corp. (AUO), the second-largest manufacturer of thin film transistor-liquid crystal display (TFT-LCD) panels in Taiwan, announced that it registered consolidate revenue of NTS35.95 billion (about US\$1.2 billion) in March, up 32.7% month-on-month (MoM).

In March, the company shipped more than 10.7 million large-sized (over-10-inch) and 16.77 million small/medium-sized panels, up 30% MoM, respectively.

In the first quarter, however, AUO had accumulated consolidate revenue of NTS93.2 billion (US\$3.1 billion), a 9.1% QoQ decrease and a six-quarter low. In the third quarter of 2009, AUO's quarterly revenue for the first time outstripped the NTS100 billion (US\$3.3 billion) level and maintained beyond the level until the first quarter of this year.

Thanks to rebounded shipments, AUO's March revenue saw a 32.7% MoM increase but still an 11.6% year-on-year (YoY) decline. The

panel maker said that the TV-panel prices in the past three months were lower than expected.

In the first quarter, AUO shipped 28.4 million large-sized panels, up 1.3% QoQ and a 4.3% YoY increase; as well as 43.5 million small/medium-sized panels, down 17.8% QoQ and a 23.7% YoY drop.

AUO registered net earnings of NTS7.4 billion (US\$246.9 million), translating into net earnings per share (EPS) of NTS0.76 (US\$0.03) in 2010, though the company suffered a loss of NTS11.3 billion (US\$376.6 million). The company announced that it will develop business deployments in higher value-added products to improve operation.

The firm also said that as of the end of 2010, it has won more than 7,500 global patents, including 551 patents won in China in last year. AUO has had more than 2,700 patents in China, making it's the leader in the optoelectronics industry in China. (QL)



China Medical University Hospital once successfully performed a surgery for a female patient of lymphoedema from Peru.