

INDEX

Accolades	Page 2
What's New	Page 21
Datebook	Page 23

**HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS
IN THE NEWS**
See Page 5

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THE REGION'S MONTHLY NEWSPAPER FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS & PHYSICIANS

Chicago Health Leaders Attend South Korea Medical Tourism Event

Leaders of Chicago Health Executives Forum (CHEF) recently attended a Medical Tourism Program in Seoul, South Korea. Kate Liebelt, CHEF President Elect and Georgia Casciato, CHEF Past President were amongst guests invited to a conference as a collaborative effort between PlanetHospital, a U.S. pioneer in the medical tourism industry, laying claim to this trend since 2002, Korea Medical Institute and The Korea Tourism Organization.

"PlanetHospital is the key intermediary that makes a global connection and builds valued relationships between patient, physician, provider and country," says Liebelt, who played an active role in securing numerous local educational opportunities for CHEF membership this last year.

"These conventions are show and tell events that allow a country to showcase their country and its medical innovations, capabilities, cutting edge research as well as hospitality, multi-lingual capabilities and cultural fit with a wide array of healthcare customers," says Casciato.

"As the trend of medical tourism is at an early stage of adoption and growth, we seek industry thought leaders to invite to these international conferences that are taking place all over the globe," says Rudy Rupak, CEO/Co-Founder, PlanetHospital. American guests included healthcare consultants, health journalists, benefits attorneys, physicians, payers and employers. Internationally speaking, PlanetHospital also hosted guests from Mexico, Italy, Germany, Bahrain, United Emirates Republic and Romania.

As healthcare goes global, the business of medical tourism is growing beyond the self-pay consumer. Healthcare abroad has



Healthcare executives, attorneys, entrepreneurs and journalists hosted by the Korean Tourism Organization attended the Korean International Medical Tourism Convention in November 2010.

become a viable cost management strategy for employers and payers working diligently to manage healthcare costs, outcomes and employee expectations," says Rupak.

According to Liebelt, "The trip represented a well orchestrated process of South Korea familiarization for attendees. Day one included a tour of Seoul with its temples, Blue House or Cheongwadae (equivalent of the U.S. White House), outdoor theatre, a historical village, traditional cuisine and shopping."

Casciato described Day two and its tours of Korean healthcare providers. Cancer treatment innovations were profiled with integrated Eastern and Western Therapies. Self-pay Cadillac providers were showcased with the Chaum Center for Prevention and Anti Aging Life Center (a high end country club membership model with facility construction also underway in Los Angeles).

Research capabilities were profiled with lectures on breakthrough therapies for ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease,) presented by Professor Seung Hyun Kim, M.D, PhD, from Hanyang University Seoul Hospital.

On Day three, the PlanetHospital tour participated in the Korea International Medical Tourism Conference. The conference was jointly hosted by Korean Tourism Organization, fnnnews.com, Korea Health Industry Development Institute and sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Ministry of Health & Welfare.

The conference was held at COEX, a convention and exhibition center that hosts 150,000 visitors a day and is connected to Asia's largest underground mall. In attendance were over 150 professionals represented by medical tourism specialists, world renowned doctors, business execu-

tives, academicians, and government officials will chambers of commerce working on building sustainable partnerships for their communities.

Says Liebelt, "Exhibit halls were lined with personnel from hospitals, health systems, clinics, and technology companies with the traditional conference business-to-business meeting schedule to facilitate relationship building and commerce. A job fair was also underway with extensive educational programming on trends in healthcare, life sciences research and innovation."

Other conference highlights included presentations on U-Healthcare (also known as "Ubiquitous Healthcare") a new, technology-oriented service concept in Korea that offers personalized portable healthcare. Speakers included Ji-Hong Joo, Professor of Law at Pusan National University, Su-Dong Kim, Chairman of the Korea Science and Technology Information Committee, U-Healthcare connects technology and healthcare services providers, legal and educational resources and government stakeholders to produce a cutting-edge, connected healthcare value chain.

According to Liebelt, "The caliber of the conference reflected Korea's commitment and dedication to attract foreign patients using an innovative, multi-faceted marketing, technology and service-line strategy."

Rupak also presented at the conference on growth strategies for Korean medical tourism and concludes by saying: "These events can be extremely valuable to both domestic and international healthcare providers as they showcase strategies for building internationally renowned health care brands who compete head on with cost, quality and customer service; for the same patient customer base."