TOURISM

Centre of excellence

MARISOL has carved a niche for itself in the medical tourism arena in Oman by facilitating access to world class research and treatment facilities in Cuba. An OER report

MARISOL which promotes Tourism and Medical Tourism to Cuba, has established its presence in Oman by providing ground breaking, cutting edge technology and research through its association with Cuba. Since its inception three years ago, the company has successfully established its presence on the medical landscape in Oman. This is amply reflected in its ever-expanding client base ranging from the key ministries, government personnel, clients from the private sector as well as the general public in Oman.

Unlike other organisations, MARISOL is the direct representative of medical institutions in Cuba. Cuban medical services are world-renowned and have pioneered the health movement globally with the sole commitment to improving the quality of life worldwide.

Humanitarian missions in 68 countries are manned by 25,000 Cuban doctors, and its medical teams have assisted victims of the Tsunamis and the earthquakes in Pakistan and Haiti. Cuba has already offered the services of its doctors and nursing teams to aid the victims of the recent earthquake and Tsunami in Japan.

**Helping Haiti**

Cuba was the first to come into Haiti with medical aid when the January 12, 2010, earthquake struck. Among the many donor nations, Cuba and its medical teams have played a major role in treating Haiti’s earthquake victims. Public health experts say the Cubans were the first to set up medical facilities among the debris and to revamp hospitals immediately after the earthquake struck.

Haiti and Cuba signed a medical cooperation agreement in 1998. Before the earthquake struck, 344 Cuban health professionals were already present in Haiti, providing primary care and obstetrical services as well as operating to restore the sight of Haitians blinded by eye diseases. More doctors were flown in shortly after the earthquake as part of the rapid response.

Although Cuba is a poor, developing country, their wealth of human resources—doctors, engineers, and disaster management experts—has enabled this small Caribbean nation to play a global role in health care and humanitarian aid alongside the far-richer nations of the west. Cuban medical teams played a key role in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami and stayed the longest among international medical teams treating the victims of the 2006 Indonesian earthquake.

They also provided the largest contingent of doctors after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. In the Pakistan relief operation, the US and Europe also dispatched medical teams. Each had a base camp with most doctors deployed for a month. The Cubans, however, deployed seven major base camps, operated 32 field hospitals, and stayed for six months.

Last year alone, 1,800 doctors from 47 developing countries graduated in Cuba, with these numbers rising rapidly. During the 1990s, Cuba became the first country to develop and market a vaccine for meningitis B. Then there was a surge in exports of its hepatitis B vaccine, which is currently being shipped to 30 countries, including China, India, Russia, Pakistan and Latin American countries.

Successful clinical trials in several countries have already established   
Cuba as a world leader in cancer   
research and treatment. Globally recognised as a frontrunner in medical research and services, Cuban experts and specialists have excelled in the field of biotechnology, medicinal drug production and Cancer treatment.

Medical services in Cuba provide a result oriented set of programmes aimed at the physical and psychological well being of patients. These specialised programmes include the rehabilitation programme, surgery programmes and retinitis pigmentosa programme which was created by Dr. Orfilio Pelaez and has been acknowledged as the most unique of its kind in the world of medicine. Other treatments include ophthalmology, the neurological restoration programme, ozone therapy, orthopedics, psoriasis, vitiligo and alopecia programmes.

A testament to Cuba’s global impact in the world of Medicine lies in the fact that they are present throughout clinics and missions in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, Russia and the Far East. Cuban doctors are actively involved in healthcare missions for the World Health Organisation and their expert services are in high demand in specialised medical organisations worldwide.

According to Marisol Cruz Fernandez, executive director, Cuba has been recognised globally as the pioneer in the treatment of skin diseases such a Vitiligo, commonly known as Leucoderma, psoriasis and alopecia, acute baldness brought on by fungal infection of the scalp.

The focus of Marisol’s medical   
tourism programme includes ophthal- mology, orthopaedics and medical rehabilitation. Giving further details, Marisol says: “Our comprehensive medical tourism package covers visa issue, travel documents, accommodation, local tours, transportation and all other related activities.

**Cutting edge care**

In 1986, the huge international success of the pioneering Cuban method for the treatment of Vitiligo, (Leucoderma) with a medicine obtained from human placenta, prompted the Cuban government to set up the Placental Histotherapy Center headed by Dr Carlos Miyares Cao for further research.

Prior to this in the 1970s Cuba used to annually export 40 tonnes of human placenta to Meriux Laboratories, in France under a commercial agreement. However, around this time, Dr Carlos Miyares Cao, a physician specialist in gynecology, obstetrics and pharmacology, and a professor from Medical School of the University of Havana, Cuba, discovered Melagenia, a substance that stimulated skin pigmentation activity, while studying live placental metabolism under laboratory conditions.

After the successful use of that substance in the treatment of Vitiligo or Leucoderma, Cuba decided during 1980-82 to discontinue the export of placenta to France and to begin, within the National Pharmaceutical Industry, the production of the new medicine for distribution in pharmacies on medical prescription. According to Marisol, in 1985, the first international service of Vitiligo patients was created at the Cira Garcia Clinic, in Havana City, under Dr Carlos Miyares Cao. The tremendous response from nearby countries like Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia etc, led to the establishment of the country’s first health tourism programme through medical tourism.

In 1987, the International and National Clinical Service for Vitiligo patients was set up to cope with the increasing number of foreign patients requesting to be treated in Cuba with the new medicine (100 patients monthly, from more than 90 countries), as well as to treat Cuban patients suffering this disease throughout the country.

Consequently, there were centres at the Canary Islands (Spain), Republic of San Marino, Madrid, (Spain); Brazil; Bogota, (Colombia); Mexico City, (Mexico); Lima, (Peru); Nicaragua; El Salvador; Entre Rios, (Argentina); Kiev, (Ukraine); Moscow and Petro grad (Russia); Kirghiz; Kazakhstan; Riga; Latvia and Nigeria, (Africa).

The success of Marisol is driven by the single-minded objective of providing a harmonious balance of genuine medical care with globally recognised research and treatment for the well being of people in Oman.

**For more information about Marisol’s medical tourism package visit www.marisolllc.com or write to** [**marisol@omantel.net.om**](mailto:marisol@omantel.net.om)**.”**