An ongoing commitment

After an absence of four months, a TaiwanICDF Mobile Medical Mission (MMM) returned to the Marshall Islands. Driven by compassion and a sense of duty, they came from afar to offer their best efforts to the islanders.

In June 2008, the first MMM cooperating with Taipei Municipal Wan Fang Hospital, was sent to the Marshall Islands, and the locals warmly welcomed them. Marshall Islands President Keewali Nole personally extended his appreciation to Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian when he attended the South Pacific Health and Medical Care Summit in Palau, and expressed his hopes for a second tour by an MMM. As a result, a team was formed and dispatched at the end of October. Wan Fang Deputy Director Hsu Chen-san, an ob/gyn, led the team. They transferred in Hawaii before they arrived in the Marshall Islands. "We didn't know there was so much to do until we arrived," said Hsu.

Hsu discovered that there was no air conditioning in the surgical wards at Majuro Hospital, and ants had infested the place. There were also serious shortages of surgical equipment. Conditions were far below par, and there was basically a shortage of human resources. As soon as there was a baby to deliver or surgery to perform, outpatient were turned away without being seen. Despite their plight, the patients accepted the situation and never complained.
The 13-member MMM arrived at the hospital to discover that the waiting room had long been packed because the news was out: “The medical team is coming. Don’t miss them; they are very good.” Some patients from the more remote islands ran to tell their fellow islanders as soon as they got the news.

During the two-week visit, the team joined forces with local doctors and treated 1,100 patients, holding clinics in obstetrics/gynecology, general surgery, orthopedics, and ophthalmology, as well as one-hour seminars every morning and afternoon for local medical staff. By doing this, they aimed to substantially improve the quality of medical services in the short time available.

“Could you come every three months?” Many patients made such requests with satisfied smiles after their treatment, revealing their urgent need for better medical resources and services. Though after two weeks of hard work the members of the team were tired, the spiritual rewards were considerable and they promised the patients: “We will be back as soon as possible.”

In fact, Wan Fang has signed a sister hospital agreement with Majuro Hospital and has planned several projects and exchange programs for training in medical technology. At the same time, the hospitals are studying the feasibility of remote care and patient referral to Taiwan. In addition to demonstrating its humanitarian spirit, the team showed international society that Taiwan can help countries in need.