



Dr. William O'Reilly (L) and Dr. Hilary Cooray with the flags of the Commonwealth Association's member nations

that the professionals from the developing countries, that includes the dentists, doctors, nurses, and the pharmacists, are migrating from the developing countries to developed countries. There is a severe shortage of trained manpower in the developing countries, like Africa and India. It is easy for the developed countries to receive these people as they are already trained. The training is done in their home country. Of course, due to the rights of people to move from one country to the other, there is no way of stopping this. Developing countries could try to offer incentives to these professionals to retain them, but not much else can be done.

At the last Commonwealth health ministers conference in Geneva, we suggested that if a developed country takes some professionals from a developing country, for example, if they take 30 nurses from Sri Lanka to Australia, that country should give the developing country some assistance to expand their training programme. In this manner, the developing country can produce more nurses, more dentists, and they won't mind a few going away. The ministers all responded positively to the idea, so its now up to the other countries to respond.

Q: What is your plan for integrating the different dental systems represented in the commonwealth dental associations so that they can work more effectively as a group?

A: It's by dialogue. The groups must get together, talk about issues, and they can learn from each other. The professionals

from the industrialized countries can examine the methods used in less industrialized countries, and the professionals from the less industrialized countries can always learn more from the industrialized countries and continue to develop themselves. Only the percentage of each group is different, but we can learn about the latest skills and technology from the different countries, so there is a transfer of technology either way. That is one of the ways of integrating the profession of dental treatment.

[Dr. O'Reilly] Dr. Cooray you make a very valid point because I remember in May last year, Sydney hosted a working group which consisted of members from a large percentage of the Commonwealth Dental Association's geographic area.

The meeting was based on the integrated and coordinated management of disasters. Of course, there have been many countries affected by disasters, Australia, the Bali bombings, the Asian tsunami. It was an honor to host it in Sydney, but the reality was that while Australia was able to provide some of the templates and infrastructure to assist nations in responding to a disaster, we were the ones who learned about the challenges in putting it on the ground in countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Thailand.

While there is a perception that the flow of information is from the developed nations to the developing nations, the reality is that it isn't the case. Everybody learns from each other. **DA**