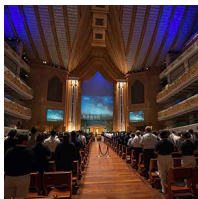


Tzu Chi International Medical Association celebrates 15th year

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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The Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA) celebrated its 15th year at a gathering in Hualien of members from 19 different countries. The meeting is being held from September 28 to October 1. While the participants have increased since its foundation and the number of service centers has grown to 40, its core value has remained unchanged – treating the patient as the priority and taking every illness treated as a lesson.

The TIMA was founded in 1996, to provide free medical care to people who do not have access to it, especially those in remote and inaccessible places and the poor. Since then, its membership has over 7,000 medical professionals who have treated patients in 39 countries.

The theme of this year's meeting, in the main auditorium of the Jing Si Hall, is "Past and Present, Changed and Unchanged", as expressed in a Chinese calligraphy at the back of the room. The event opened with a singing of the Tzu Chi anthem. Then Dr. Tissot Low, Director of the Respiratory Care Center of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, and Lin Yi-Jing, Head Nurse of the Hospital, thanked all the members who had traveled long distances to attend; the two chaired the meeting. Not even the wind and rain of Typhoon Jelawat, which passed close to Taiwan in late September, could dampen everyone's enthusiasm. The thanks were followed by a performance of Chinese dance.



Dr. Lin Chin-Lon, CEO of the Tzu Chi Medical Mission, officially declared the convention open. He said that, during the next three days, all the members would witness the changes of TIMA over the last 14 years -- ages, location, equipment, number of hospitals and personnel. And they would also see what will not change; how joy comes through love and caring.

Master Cheng Yen has said: "When you walk, you leave behind your footprints. When you see, you keep your memories with you." Dr. Lin urged all members, when they return to their respective countries, to share with fellow medical professionals not only what they have done but also what they have seen at the convention. "Take a look not only at the scenery of Hualien but also at our hospital, our medical staff, our non-medical staff and also our logistic staff. 2013 will be the 15th Anniversary of TIMA. Please invite medical professionals from your country to participate in our next TIMA convention."

Dr. Lin expressed sadness that the medical profession was too profit-centered. "We must prevent it from being too commercialized. We must not forget and uphold the core value of the profession, which is treating the patient as the priority and taking every illness treated as a lesson, to obtain the objective of 'Protecting Lives, Protecting Health, and Protecting Love.' It is also the Master's wish for a patient-centered medical profession and the respect for life."

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and encouraged the members to continue to support the Tzu Chi Health Promotion Center and encouraged