

## International Collaboration Changes The Face of Emergency Medicine in China

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*by: Mark Willis*

When Glenn Hamilton, M.D., travelled to China in 1989, there were about 10,000 cars in Beijing. When he returned last year, the number had soared to more than a quarter-million. The burgeoning growth in motor traffic reflected China's rapid economic expansion. Its down side, however, included a comparable increase in motor vehicle trauma cases in Chinese hospitals.

Since 1989, medical educators have recognized an ever-growing need for emergency medicine services in the world's most populous nation. Thanks to a long-term collaboration with the Department of Emergency Medicine at Wright State University School of Medicine, Chinese physicians are beginning to change the design and function of hospital emergency departments. They are developing clinical training programs following Wright State's model. "They're putting a Chinese face on an American concept," explains Dr. Hamilton, professor and chair of emergency medicine at Wright State.

On his first China junket, Dr. Hamilton led a People-to-People tour of American emergency medicine specialists. He returned in 1992 to collaborate on a \$1.2 million dollar grant awarded to China Medical University in the northern city of Shenyang. The grant came from the China Medical Board, a New York-based philanthropic foundation headed by William D. Sawyer, M.D., former dean of medicine at Wright State. The grant's purpose was establishing China's first emergency medicine residency program.

"In addition to assembling a training program, we also introduced the Chinese to the concept of a clinical site where emergency medicine could be taught," Dr. Hamilton explains. "Their hospitals had an emergency department, but it wasn't organized as such. It operated more as a consulting service where patients were kept long enough to make a diagnosis so they could be admitted to the precise hospital service. The average emergency department stay was over two days."

When the first of several groups of Chinese physicians journeyed to Dayton in 1993, they studied emergency department design as well as Wright State's educational curriculum. During a nine-month stay, they gained firsthand experience in the emergency departments of Wright State's community teaching hospitals, including Children's Medical Center, Franciscan Medical Center, Good Samaritan Hospital, Kettering Medical Center, and Miami Valley Hospital. Dr. Hamilton also credits the emergency medicine practice community in Dayton for sharing their expertise with the Chinese.

After their return to Shenyang, the Chinese physicians made significant changes in the emergency department at China Medical University. They added triage stations where patients were assessed and treated according to the severity of their emergencies. Other simple changes included wheeled carts to make diagnostic equipment portable, curtains for patient privacy, better lighting, and signs that clearly identified emergency entrances.

Another component of Wright State's China collaboration has been led by Leslie Wolf, M.D., a board-certified toxicologist and assistant professor of emergency medicine here. She is working with colleagues at China Medical University to develop China's first toxicology laboratory and poison control and information center in Shenyang. Under Dr. Wolf's direction, two Chinese toxicologists have completed a year of training in the U.S. She returns to Shenyang this summer to follow up on their progress.

After five years of collaboration, Wright State's partners at China Medical University have established their own emergency medicine residency as well as training programs for medical students and emergency department nurses. Last year Dr. Hamilton presented the American perspective on emergency medicine education to the presidents of China's major medical universities. The presentation launched a new \$400,000 project funded by the China Medical Board that will make the educational model available to medical universities throughout China, including the newest one in Tibet.

“We’ve had the opportunity to work with capable and receptive colleagues in Shenyang. They are making very real changes in emergency medicine that have the potential to make an impact throughout China,” Dr. Hamilton says of the collaboration. “We supplied the background perspective and concepts. They are developing them the way that works best for them -- with a Chinese perspective.”

“I enjoyed visiting New York, Chicago, and San Francisco,” a Chinese colleague told Dr. Hamilton. “But in terms of learning about emergency medicine, the best place to be was Dayton.”