



A Conference of the Adventist Doctor Association, June 15-16, 2001.

Photo courtesy of Adventist Doctor Association.

## Adventist Doctor Association, Korea

### KYEONG SOO SOHN

Kyeong Soo Sohn graduated from Seoul National University Medical School and completed his internship and residency at Seoul National University Hospital. He served as the head of circulatory internal medicine at Anyang Hospital and the director of the medical office of the Capital Corps. Currently, he operates an internal medicine clinic in Wonju. He was appointed president of the ACT Association in 2016 and president of the Adventist Doctor Association in 2019, contributing to the ministry of the Korean Adventist Church.

Adventist Doctor Association (ADA) (also, KSDA Medical Doctor Association) was founded in March 1990 to spread the faith of Adventists through medical-missionary service as a religious organization of Adventist medical doctors in Korea. As of 2020, the organization consists of 600 doctors and 70 medical students from Adventists and is registered as an affiliated organization of the Department of Health and Welfare of the Korean Union Conference.<sup>1</sup>

## Organization

The Korean Adventist Church began medical work in 1908 when Dr. Riley Russell, a first medical missionary, established a clinic in Soonan. After that, Dr. Georges H. Rue established Adventist hospitals in Seoul (1931) and Busan (1951) to develop medical ministry. As a result of efforts to cultivate medical doctors, along with the development of medical ministry, the number of Adventist medical doctors increased. In 1989 several Adventist doctors gathered to plan to establish an organization to promote medical missionary work. After holding a promoter meeting in March of that year, they gathered Adventist doctors for a year and planned to establish an Adventist-doctor association.

The promoters held an inaugural general meeting at the Songnisan Park Hotel on March 9, 1990 and founded the Adventist Doctor Association (SDA Medical Doctor Association). Doctor Hyuk-seok Park, who was an obstetrician at Busan Adventist Hospital, was elected as the first president, and 150 Adventist doctors joined as members. At the time of its foundation, Adventist Doctor Association's headquarters were located at Seoul Adventist Hospital. As the major ministries, Adventist Doctor Association has pursued church pioneering through medical missionary work, fostering a younger generation, publishing academic journals, health and temperance education, and overseas medical support.<sup>2</sup>

## History of the Association

Despite the fact that the Adventist Doctor Association was organized for missionary work based on medical service, for the first 10 years it mainly focused on meetings to promote friendship and faith among Adventist doctors. The association occasionally held a family retreat to promote friendship among the Adventists, promoted the faith of Adventists under the guidance of the leaders of the Korean Union Conference, and shared their mission as Adventist doctors.

It was in 1999 that the Adventist Doctor Association began to carry out missionary work in earnest through medical service. Jung-sik Park, Jeong-sik Min, Yong-woon Kim, and Chang-joon Oh provided free medical treatment for foreign workers every afternoon on the Sabbath at Sahmyook Nursing and Health College. Free medical activities for foreign workers were linked to overseas medical volunteer activities. Since the late 1990s, the association has conducted overseas medical volunteer activities through links with local churches in the Philippines, China, Russia, and Cambodia every year. In particular, the Adventist Doctor Association conducted medical service to 2,600 residents in Bohul, Panglao, and Robok areas in the Philippines from December 21 to 29, 2003.<sup>3</sup>

The free medical service of the Adventist Doctor Association has been carried out in earnest in Korea since 1999. In that year the association established a free clinic in Sanggye-dong, Seoul, and conducted medical, beauty, and skin-care services for local residents with church members working at the Bible Study Institute in Sanggye-dong.

This community volunteer work was also carried out in Cheonghak-ri and Byeolnae-myeon, Namyangju-si with students of Sahmyook Nursing and Health College.<sup>4</sup>

Medical services conducted by the Adventist Doctor Association (ADA) with Seoul Adventist Hospital and Sahmyook Nursing and Health College have developed into a valuable ministry that shares God's love with many foreign workers and the underprivileged in Korea. Accordingly, some doctors belonging to the SDA Medical Doctor Association launched the Love Sharing Association (LSA) in 2004<sup>5</sup> and conducted medical volunteer work. The Love Sharing Association conducted free medical volunteer activities in Kazakhstan (2005), Mongolia (2006), Bangladesh (2007), and Haiti (2010). In 2011 the LSA also carried out a project to promote maternal and child health in Mokmai, Laos, with the support of KOICA (International Cooperation Foundation) project funded by the Korean government.<sup>6</sup>

The ADA and the LSA conducted free medical activities at domestic and overseas areas, along with the SDA Medical-Student Association (SMA). The SMA was organized in 1983 as a group of medical students with a belief in Adventism. It was in the 2000s that this SMA group began to be active in earnest. In particular, the SMA conducted medical-volunteer activities in the Philippines, Laos, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and Russia every year in partnership with the LSA. As an example, the LSA and SMA provided free volunteer work in Rojas, the Philippines, from July 24 to 31, 2005, to treat 1,000 patients and provide health education for residents.<sup>7</sup>

Since 2007 the Adventist Doctor Association has provided health-care services for the underprivileged along with the Dongdaemun Social Welfare Center.<sup>8</sup> The subjects of treatment were the disabled, the elderly living alone, and foreign workers, and the subjects of treatment were internal medicine, otolaryngology, dentistry, plastic surgery, ophthalmology, and orthopedics. This activity continued until 2010, and from 2011 it was expanded to the Pocheon Social Welfare Center.<sup>9</sup>

From June 11 to 12, 2010, the Adventist Doctor Family Festival was held at English Village in Yangpyeong.<sup>10</sup> The event, which was held again for the first time in 10 years, was held to share the mission and vision of medical missionaries together. More than one hundred fifty families of doctors participated in the event, which was led by the Health and Welfare Department of the Korean Union Conference, and had time to share festivals and visions. Since then the event was planned as an annual event and expanded to a joint meeting of the ADA and the SMA.<sup>11</sup>

The ADA also actively promoted cooperative ministry with various organizations related to the Adventist Church. In July 2012 the ADA conducted cooperative work with the 1,000 Missionary Movement Headquarters in the Philippines,<sup>12</sup> and in July 2015, it signed a mutual cooperation agreement with the Morning Calm Adoption Welfare Association.<sup>13</sup> These activities served as an opportunity for the ADA to expand its social role and participation.

At the Adventist Doctor Family Festival held in September 2015, the ADA set up a separate "medical work department" and "missionary work department" within the organization, and the "medical work department"

led the "Doctor's Forum." This forum redefined the social roles and responsibilities of the ADA and set the direction for seeking sustainable medical service activities. According to the forum's direction, the ADA established a free clinic (Korea Nepal Love Clinic) in Nepal in connection with the ADRA Korea and the Nepal Love Missionary Society and secured a bridgehead for sustainable medical service.<sup>14</sup>

In 2017 the ADA established a medical advisory network for overseas missionaries on SNS and began operating a 24-hour medical-counseling system. There were about one hundred overseas missionaries belonging to the Korean Union Conference, and they had no way to solve the medical problems they faced at the mission site. However, with the establishment of this medical-advisory network, missionaries were able to receive medical advice through this network. This ministry became a useful activity to support missionaries' medical-volunteer work.<sup>15</sup>

New executive members were appointed at the ADA's Family Festival and General Meeting held in October 2018. The newly appointed executive members decided to promote several important works for the development of the association; establishing a SDA Doctor's Hall and a free medical clinic, establishing a non-profit corporation, organizing the history of the ADA, and revising the articles of association. Task Force teams were formed for these ministries. These special projects were planned for the development of the Adventist Doctor Association. In addition, the ADA is carrying out various missions for the development of the association, such as strengthening support for overseas missionaries, supporting the development of SMA, and merging the Love Sharing Association organized as an affiliated organization.<sup>16</sup>

## Role and Position in the Country

The Adventist Doctor Association is an independent organization of doctors at the Korean Adventist Church and is conducting domestic and overseas medical volunteer activities in connection with the Health and Welfare Department of the Korean Union Conference, Seoul Adventist Hospital, and Sahmyook Health University. Since 1999 the association has been actively engaged in medical-volunteer activities in Asia and Russia including the Philippines, Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Tibet, and Laos every year after year. In particular, it plays a central role in direct medical missionary work, such as opening a clinic in Tibet to make such medical service a sustainable ministry.

In particular, the ADA is developing to support and nurture the SDA medical students as one of the important ministries. This ministry raises young doctors to expand the social influence of the Korean Adventist Church. Due to active support for SMA, the number of doctors in Korea has increased to more than six hundred. This shows the results of the development of SMA leading to the development of the ADA.

The Adventist Doctor Association supports medical missionary work in connection with the ministry of the ADAR Korea, the 1,000 missionaries, and the PMM missionaries, and provides free medical treatment and financial support in connection with various welfare centers run by the Korean Adventist Church. These activities allow us

to know the social roles and responsibilities that the ADA is paying attention to.

Ahead of its 30th anniversary, the Adventist Doctor Association is seeking the development of the association by strengthening purposeful ministries such as SMA support, overseas missionaries support, health care mission promotion, and holding academic seminars.

## List of Presidents

Hyuk Seok Park (March 1991-May 1995); Un Gyeong Im (June 1995-May 2001); Jong Hwa Lee (June 2001-May 2005); Chang Jun Oh (June 2005-May 2009); Kwang Seon Park (June 2009-May 2011); Je Seong Yoo (June 2011-September 2014); Yeong Myeong Jeon (October 2014-2018); Kyeong Soo Sohn (2019-Present).

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### NOTES

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