



A panoramic view of the sea from Yeosu Sanitarium & Hospital

Photo courtesy of Yeosu Sanitarium & Hospital.

# Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital

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## YEON GEUN PYO

Yeon Geun Pyo graduated from Honam Sahmyook Academy, and then Sahmyook University. He has an M.B.A. from Honam University (2013). Starting in 1998, he has served as pastor in several churches in Southwest Korean Conference (SWKC), and as a treasurer of the SWKC from 2004 to 2006. He was director of Sunchang Nursing Home from 2017 to 2020. He has been director of Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital since 2021.

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Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital (aka. Yeosu Yoyang Byungwon) is a nursing hospital established in 1996 to take care of the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of patients through natural treatment that incorporates the health principles of the Adventist faith. The hospital, run by the Korean Union Conference, is located at 204-32, Jangsu-ro, Hwayang-myeon, Yeosu-si, Jeollanam-do.<sup>1</sup>

## Developments That Led to Establishment of the Institution

It was only in 1908 that the Korean Adventist Church began its medical business. The medical work, which started in Soonan, South Pyongan Province, began to develop in earnest when the hospital moved to Seoul in 1931. In 1951, under the influence of the Korean War, the Adventist hospital was established in Busan.<sup>2</sup> Seoul Adventist Hospital and Busan Adventist Hospital have become the center of the Korean Union Conference's medical work. However, as Korea entered an aging society in the 1990s and the number of terminally ill patients increased, the Korean Union Conference realized the need to run nursing hospitals that take care of patients through NEWSTART natural treatment.

The Adventists developed a nursing home business using the NEWSTART health principle. In Korea the Adventist NEWSTART principles were widely distributed in the 1980s. Especially in the 1990s, many Korean Adventists established the NEWSTART Nursing Home to care for patients. In response, the Korean Union Conference (KUC) planned to establish a nursing hospital operated by the denomination. On March 17, 1993, the KUC established a promotion committee to establish a nursing home. The promotion committee was recommended by local conferences to establish a nursing home, and in 1994 it selected the Yocheon area recommended by the Southwest Korean Conference (SWKC) as the final site and promoted the site purchase and nursing home project.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the establishment of a nursing hospital began in earnest.

## Founding of the Institution

On July 14, 1994, the KUC decided to purchase 9,000 pyeong (7.4 acres) of land, 228, Jangsu-ri, Hwayang-myeon, Yecheon-gun, Jeollanam-do, where it was recommended by the SWKC for 1.2 billion won (\$1,074,000) and to build a 600 pyeong (1980 square meters) nursing home building on the site. The SWKC was in charge of purchasing land, and the construction of the building was jointly paid by the KUC, Seoul Adventist Hospital, and Busan Adventist Hospital. The KUC purchased the site in January 1995 and completed the construction in the spring of 1996. And on May 30, 1996, the nursing home was opened under the name of Jangsu NEWSTART Health Clinic, and Won-Woong Cho was appointed as the first director.<sup>4</sup>

In January 1997 Jangsu NEWSTART Health Center merged with the NEWSTART Center in Deokyusan and renamed the Yocheon NSTART Health Center. After that, Il-Kwon Yang was appointed as the second director of the health center, establishing a system to develop into a nursing hospital.<sup>5</sup> At the time, the NEWSTART Health Center was not certified as a clinic-level medical institution due to a lack of staff and inpatients, and did not benefit from health insurance coverage. As a result, the health center was in a very difficult financial situation.

To overcome this problem, the KUC has promoted the NEWSTART Health Center to the level of a nursing hospital. Thus, Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital (YSH) was officially opened in August 1998.<sup>6</sup> At that time, the medical staff consisted of two doctors, ten nurses, one physiotherapist, and one clinical pathologist, with about seventy inpatients a day.

## History of the Institution

In January 2000, Chul Namgoong was appointed as medical director, and in March the construction of a staff's house began. It placed the hospital on a solid foundation for further improvement. On February 28, 2001, Ki-Dong Lim was appointed as the third director of the hospital but resigned after a year and a half. Therefore, on August 1, 2002, Pastor Sang-in Jeong, who was working as a hospital chaplain, acted on behalf of the director and was appointed as the fourth director on October 1.<sup>7</sup>

On August 27, 2003, the main building was remodeled and expanded as well as the building houses amenities such as auditoriums, restaurants, prayer rooms, and indoor sports rooms, and medical facilities such as natural treatment rooms, music rooms, and physical therapy rooms. In addition, hospital rooms for hospitalized patients, rest areas, cold warehouses, and staff accommodations were included.<sup>8</sup>

On December 16, 2006, YSH celebrated its tenth anniversary. At the ceremony the director of the YSH explained the need to specialize in NEWSTART health principles, suggesting the mission of the hospital. He also announced a special plan to invite 10 disadvantaged patients every month to provide free medical treatment from the following year. As a result, YSH was able to become a leading institution in social service.<sup>9</sup>

In July 2010 Cheol Namgung, who had been serving as the medical director, was appointed as the fifth director of the institute.<sup>10</sup> He remodeled the cafeteria and improved kitchen hygiene. Furthermore, he constructed two more dormitories to accommodate more employees behind the hospital. He also set up rooms for physical therapy, laundry, and dry sauna to ensure internal stability.<sup>11</sup>

In February 2012 Han-Bum Suh was appointed as the sixth director of the institute.<sup>12</sup> He added a solar power system on top of the sanitarium. In 2014 the cafeteria was further remodeled, the patients' beds were replaced by hospital beds, and high-frequency medical devices were installed. Due to the effort put forth for the external growth and internal improvement, the YSH passed the assessment organized by the Ministry of Health and Welfare and was certified as a nursing hospital in April 2015.<sup>13</sup>

In October 2016, the seventh director, Hak-Bong Lee, envisioned Yeosu Sanitarium for holistic healing to heal patients not only physically but emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, as well. He launched the "100-day project" to help patients break off unhealthy habits and recover from lifestyle diseases.<sup>14</sup>

In 2017 he began remodeling the entire hospital building. All of the patient rooms were remodeled, and the external appearance of the buildings was improved. For the safety and convenience of the patients, facilities such as the sprinkler system and the patient leisure room were expanded. In September he sought to improve the healing system for seriously ill patients by introducing a high frequency thermal therapy machine and improved kitchen and cafeteria hygiene with an ultrasonic dishwasher. In 2018 an elevator was installed to help patients move more comfortably, especially for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and the ones with difficulty in ambulating.<sup>15</sup>

In 2019 the hospital constructed a cypress foot bath, along with a barefoot ocher road, called “Da-Nat-Gil” (the road of healing of all diseases). It also prepared the outdoor wooden plinths and beds, which are 3m wide and 30m long, to help patients sunbathe in order to boost the efficacy of sunshine therapy while enjoying fresh air surrounded by beautiful nature.<sup>16</sup> With all these facilities’ equipment, YSH has developed a medical institution worthy of the name hospital.

In February 2021 Yeon-Geun Pyo was appointed as the eighth director of YSH. Shortly after his inauguration, YSH installed a high power dehumidifier to reduce the humidity during monsoon season and to increase the hospital income so that the hospital would have more patients. It has improved the humidity in the hospital, which is located near the ocean. A big water purifier that can purify 60 tons of water a day was installed, which uses reverse osmolar pressure. Meanwhile, a computer system between medical and administrations and other departments was upgraded to prepare for the certification process done by the Department of Health and Human Services.

## Historical Role of the Institution

Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital was the first nursing hospital run by the KUC and played a major role in the development of the medical mission works of the Korean Adventist Church. In particular, much effort has been put into developing into a professional nursing hospital. As a result, it has safely passed the accreditation assessment, contributing to the development of the nursing hospital in Korean society.

As I have already described, the YSH was first granted an accredited institute certification from the office of Korea Institute for Healthcare Accreditation under the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 2015<sup>7</sup> and passed its interim accreditation assessment in 2017. During the second-cycle accreditation assessment in 2019, it satisfied 241 categories examined and was granted the Accreditation Certificate.<sup>18</sup> Successfully passing the two major accreditations, the YSH now could secure a position to stand as a cradle of holistic healing from all chronic lifestyle diseases found in modern society.

YSH played a role in promoting the NEWSTART health message of the Adventist Church in Korean society. Many people who went through the hospital have been treated from incurable diseases. Most of them confessed their faith and were baptized. In addition, YSH shares Christ’s love by giving free treatment to those who are unable to receive treatment due to financial difficulties. As a medical institution established by God, YSH still plays its best role in medical missionary work.

## Outlook

To keep pace with the rapid changes in the healthcare industry today, the YSH purchased a building site of 3,967m<sup>2</sup> nearby the hospital in 2018, and purchased Baek Ho Pension located on Baekyaro 82, Hwajungmyeun,

Yoesu-city. In particular, the pension has been used as a lifestyle medicine education center since November 2019.<sup>19</sup>

In order to fulfill the vision to “grow as a health education and recovery center in between home and hospital for chronic diseases,” Lifestyle Medicine Institution, as a sister institution by Medi-Pension, is preparing to open in February 2020. Its collaborating institution, between “Shimtuh Insights for Health” and “JWR Wellness Clinics” in Loma Linda, United States, is supporting this project.<sup>20</sup>

In concert with the national community-care program, YSH sets its objectives to help healing and educating patients with chronic diseases and their off-springs having a high incidence rate including patients suffering from metabolic diseases (cardiovascular diseases, obesity, diabetes), cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases with the help of clinical nutrition, natural holistic treatment on the local as well as nationwide level round the year.

Now the hospital is located on the building site of 23,697m<sup>2</sup> with the total site area of 47,208m<sup>2</sup>. Its facilities include the three-storey main hospital building with a basement, a two-storey annex, three houses for staff members, and several farms. YSH has 98 beds and 48 staff members. In order to fulfill the vision of “the world’s best naturalistic lifestyle remedy hospital,” all of the staff members are dedicated to meet the holistic healing, educational, diagnostic, and missional purposes.

Future industry trends are summarized in the three elements of Environment, Society, Governance. Reflecting these trends, YSH has established the following new management for hospital operations:

The first policy is pro-environmental management strategy. To support nutritional needs for the patients who go back home, the hospital is operating an organic food farm. We plan to increase the service by increasing sales and commerce of health foods and products.

The second policy is social responsibility. YSH plans to educate our workers, patients, and also volunteers who can teach lifestyle medicine to the public, so that the culture of NEWSTART lifestyle would be soundly planted in our society and the world.

And the third policy is transparent governance. All workers of YSH should accept "servant leadership" as their work ethic. In an age where everything changes rapidly, this "servant leadership" is a very necessary factor. YSH plans to provide self-development programs to improve interdepartmental collaboration, delegation of administrators' authority and responsibility, and professionalism by using communication, transparency, and initiative as keywords.

## List of Directors

Jangsu NEWSTART Health Center (1996-1997): Won-Woong Cho (1996-1997).

Yocheon NEWSTART Health Center (1997-1998): Il-Kwon Yang (1997-1998).

Yeosu Sanitarium and Hospital (1998- ): Il-Kwon Yang (1998-2001); Gi-Dong Lim (2001-2002); Sang-In Jeong (2002-2009); Cheol Namgoong (2009-2012); Han-Beom Seo (2012-2016); Hak-Bong Lee (2016-2021); Yeon-Geun Pyo (2021- ).

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## NOTES

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2. See, Geun Hwa Lee, *A Retrospective of Medical Missionary work at the Korean Adventist Church* (Los Angeles, CA: Korean Adventist Press of North America, 2003).

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