

## Mongolia

Mongolia lies in central Asia between Siberia and China, and is slightly larger than Alaska, with an area of 1,565,000 sq km. The population is 2,617,379 (1999 est.), a large proportion of which live in the Capital, Ulaanbaatar. The birth rate and infant mortality rates (64.6/1000) are both high in what is a largely Mongol population (90%) of predominantly Tibetan Buddhist. There are thus a large number of children with congenital anomalies who have to be treated within the context of the Buddhist faith, in a country with limited resources.



A view of the Mongolian Country-side outside Ulaanbaatar

The Maternal and Child Hospital is a large, seventeen-year old Russian-built hospital. Unfortunately the construction has been substandard and, as a result, the building is deteriorating; some of the walls are crumbling and lino has lifted from areas of the floor. Maintenance is such that nurses and cleaners attend to putting around the window frames in preparation for winter. However, recent attention to some of the problems with in the theatre complex has seen improvements since the visit in 2000.

The Centre consists of two campuses in close proximity; the Children's hospital accommodates 150 beds, conducts over 5000 anaesthetics per year, and has 30 beds allocated to Paediatric Urology. Children requiring treatment within the specialties of General Surgery, Otolaryngology, Ophthalmology and Facio-Maxillary Surgery are treated at the Children's campus, including care provided in four operating rooms each generally dedicated to a specialty. An out-of-hours emergency operating room is available but children requiring Cardiac Surgery, Orthopaedic Surgery, or treatment for trauma are taken to other hospitals in Ulaanbaatar.

The initial contact was through Dr Jeffrey Tan, a Melbourne Gynaecologist who has been teaching endoscopic techniques in Mongolia since 1993. As a result of his visits an email was sent to Professor Dewan, looking to improve the supply of endoscopic equipment for the Urology Unit. The initial Paediatric Surgical visit was in 2000 and has been followed by further visits in 2002, 2003 and 2004; the latter two visits were from John Harvey from Sydney and David Croaker from Canberra. The Royal College of Australasian Surgeons also supports the awarding of a scholarship to two of the surgeons from Mongolia. Further visits are to be planned with the Mongolian surgeons, according to their needs.