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AOHP Educates Japanese Practitioners on the Value of Building a Hospital Occupational/Employee Health Department

PITTSBURGH – Two members of the Association of Occupational Health Professionals in Healthcare (AOHP) traveled to Japan in January to educate Japanese infection control practitioners, nurses, physicians and hospital administrators about the importance of establishing Occupational/Employee Health departments in Japanese hospitals.

AOHP Executive President Mary Bliss, RN, COHN, and Past President Dee Tyler, RN, COHN-S, FAAOHN, offered a two-day conference - Employee Health in Healthcare - in Osaka, Japan on January 9 and 10. Their discussion, presented in English and translated into Japanese by interpreters, highlighted the specialty practice of occupational health in the United States and how these professionals collaborate with other departments in the hospital to promote employee health and high quality patient care. They also shared the history, mission, and vision of AOHP with attendees.

“AOHP strives to be recognized as the defining resource and leading authority in the field of occupational health in healthcare,” explains Bliss. “As the nation's only professional organization with the exclusive mission of addressing the needs and concerns of occupational health professionals in healthcare settings, we appreciate opportunities to provide education on a global scale.”

This conference is the latest in a series of collaborative projects between AOHP and Japanese healthcare practitioners, which began in 2010 through a formal partnership with the Japanese Infection Control Support Association (JICSA). AOHP's message is important to this international audience as the role of occupational health professionals is just now being developed as an area of specialized nursing expertise in Japan's healthcare system.

“I believe that we were able to create a stir in the Japanese healthcare arena and attract attention to the importance of employee health for healthcare workers,” says Eiji Doi, President of JICSA, a member of AOHP and coordinator of the conference. “I truly appreciate Ms. Mary Bliss and Ms. Dee Tyler, who took their precious time to fly the

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long distance to Japan to help us. I hope to continue working on this tiny wave and expand it to the rest of Japan.”

AOHP's well respected training and education resource manual *Getting Started: Occupational Health in the Healthcare Setting* was translated into Japanese in 2014. Then AOHP President Emeritus Sandra Domeracki, FNP, RN, COHN-S, provided an overview of the manual's content in July 2014. Ms. Domeracki's keynote speech at a meeting in Osaka was attended by more than 500 of the country's nurses and other health professionals who work in the areas of occupational health, infection control, sterile processing and central distribution.

“We are excited and honored to be able to offer resources and support to encourage the advancement of occupational health practice in Japan,” says Tyler. “Though laws and regulations that impact the work of occupational health professionals can differ from state to state and country to country, the core function of what we do to improve the health, safety and well-being of the healthcare workforce, facilitates optimal patient care, can provide benefits worldwide.”

“Now that AOHP is elevating the profession of occupational health in Japan through conferences and workshops, as well as the translation of our *Getting Started* Manual into Japanese,” Bliss concludes, “we hope that other countries will look to AOHP to help advance their occupational health practices.”

AOHP is a national association with about 1,000 members that promotes health, safety and well-being for healthcare personnel through: advocating for employee health and safety; occupational health education and networking opportunities; health and safety advancement through best practice and research; and partnering with employers, regulatory agencies and related associations.

For more information, please call AOHP Headquarters at 800-362-4347, or e-mail info@aohp.org.

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