

# ADVICE GIVEN TO MIND YOUR HEART

Associate Prof. Dr. Nguyen Si Huyen is an overseas Vietnamese and a cardiology expert in Germany. He has had many links with experts in his field in HCM City. While he was in the city to attend the annual German Vietnamese cardiovascular conference, the *Weekly* talked with him about preventing heart diseases.

**With your experience both overseas and in Vietnam, can you give a general evaluation of how Vietnam stands in preventing heart disease and treating sufferers?**

Twenty years ago, Vietnam's cardiovascular expertise had a big gap in material and knowledge. However, today, at key places such as Hanoi National Heart Institute, HCM City University of Medicine, Cho Ray Hospital, HCM City Heart Institute and Hue University, there has been fast progress and Vietnam now keeps pace with the world's advances.

In important matters like interventional cardiology with the mitral valvuloplasty and operating on the congenital heart diseases, Vietnam has a firm foothold. However, there are other basic gaps for the long-term development of medicine that are worth considering. These are basic research subjects that have not been sufficiently considered because of the fever of economic development.



From right: Prof. Dr. Nguyen Si Huyen, Dr. R. Maxeiner, Prof. Dr. H. Sievert, Dr. G. Haug, Dr. Fleischmann, Dr. K. Schlotterbeck, and Prof. Dr. H. Lamberz

**The increase in heart diseases in Vietnam is worrying. What is your view of this and what can be done to cope?**

Given conditions in Vietnam, I think there are four big issues: the congenital heart disease, the valve heart

disease after rheumatic fever, coronary artery disease and other diseases related to the heart.

The number of congenital heart disease sufferers is almost unchanged and is of the same proportion as in the West. I think two issues that

have not been satisfactorily dealt with in Vietnam are diagnosis for patients in remote areas and the small number of cardiovascular surgery experts given the existing number of patients.

The valve heart disease after rheumatic fever is a con-

sequence of being infected with the heart valve. Thanks to the use of ultrasound in early diagnosis in Vietnam now, the disease can be discovered early and cured promptly. Therefore, the disease tends to be less serious. What matters is how to handle diagnosis and confirm prevention and treatment for patients in remote areas.

The rate of coronary artery disease in developed countries is 8-10% of the population. I don't have an exact number in Vietnam but I think the ratio may be the same.

My advice always is that prevention is better than cure. So, the important thing is to change everyone's way of life from a young age: exercise every day by walking an hour a day, cycling 20-30 minutes or swimming or jogging. It is advisable not to gain weight and a suitable regime for exercising and eating and drinking to resume the ideal weight is also essential. It is advisable to eat more vegetables than meat and it is best to eat fish at least two to three times a week. Avoid eating fat and use only vegetable oil for

cooking. Don't smoke. From 45 years of age onward, it is necessary to have a heart check once a year and check risk elements such as hypertension and diabetes.

**Could you give advice for business people, many of whom are the *Weekly's* readers, in heart disease prevention and treatment?**

Apart from ordinary risk elements that everyone may have, business people also have stress while at work. Stress is a risk element playing a very important role in the condition that leads to a heart attack. So the chance of suffering a heart attack is greater for business people working under a lot of stress. I only have two short pieces of advice: first, people must be aware that stress is a subjective element, so they can adjust the situation themselves; second, people must balance work and relaxation. Relaxing positively through a regime of exercising the body is the best way of relaxing. **Joining you in HCM City is a group of cardiovascular experts from Germany. Can you tell us briefly about the group's activities?**

As in other years, with the HCM City Cardiology



## ONE CARING PERSON AMONG MANY

"I love Vietnam and Vietnamese people simply because of their gentleness and loveliness. That is also shown through the operations that I usually perform together with my colleagues in charity operations for children and people suffering the heart disease in HCM City," said Prof. Dr. P. Vogt, director of the department for cardiovascular surgery at the University of Giessen, Germany. Prof. Vogt has been a member of the German Vietnamese Association of Cardiology since 1997 and he has been president of the Vietnamese German Academy for Science and Education in Cardiology and Cardiovascular Surgery since 2002. This year he carried out his charity surgery at Thong Nhat and Cho Ray hospitals. In all, he operated on 11 patients and all the patients are recovering.

Society's sponsorship, the Vietnamese German cardiovascular conference took place on November 21-24 at Thong Nhat Hospital. Besides exchanging new information and holding talks about specialized cardiovascular issues, professors and doctors in the group, to-

gether with local colleagues, handled complicated heart surgery on patients at Thong Nhat Hospital, Cho Ray Hospital and the Heart Institute. They also performed heart surgery on patients at Thong Nhat and Cho Ray hospitals on November 24-27.

Reported by staff writers

## AT HOME IN GERMANY AND VIETNAM

Associate Prof. Dr. Nguyen Si Huyen is a visiting teacher at the HCM City Center for Training Health Officials, and at Hue University. He is chairman of the German Vietnamese Association of Cardiology, vice head of the internal heart department of Helmstedt Hospital, a hospital for teaching of Otto-von-Guericke University in Magdeburg, Germany. Huyen has had contact with the Vietnamese health sector for the past 20 years. He and a German colleague started direct involvement with a course about ultrasonic diagnosis for HCM City doctors under the auspices of the association for helping Vietnam, Hilfsaktion Vietnam. Huyen helped introduce ultrasound diagnosis into courses for student doctors.

Prof. Huyen plays an important role in organizing annual training courses of different fields in health for Vietnamese doctors. In the past seven years, he has concentrated on cardiovascular studies. The German Vietnamese Association of Cardiology, established in 1997, has participated in scientific activities not only in HCM City but also at Hue University and Hanoi National Heart Institute. Huyen's main activity is that he and local top experts increase the scientific understanding of cardiovascular disease for Vietnamese doctors, both in theory and practice. The association organizes the German-Vietnamese conference annually in Germany and Vietnam.



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