A new era for China dawned in 2011. In the past year, the country surpassed Japan to become the world’s second largest economy and the United States’ largest creditor. China has also become a large and attractive new market for goods and services produced all over the world thanks to a huge trade surplus with the United States (more than $250 billion a year), an economy that is growing at an astonishingly rapid rate, and increasing demand from its population for higher-quality goods and services.

Surprisingly, primary medical care does not exist in China. Due to a significant shortage of primary care physicians (including ophthalmologists), Chinese citizens must visit hospitals for their medical care and see whichever doctors are on duty. This situation, however, is changing rapidly.

**EYE CARE TODAY**

Currently, the level of eye care in China is far behind that of the United States. Cataracts and degenerative myopia are the most significant causes of visual disability. The association between myopia and glaucoma is strong, but there is a lower incidence of retinal disease such as age-related macular degeneration in China than in the West.

Calculated on the basis of per million population per year, only 500 patients undergo cataract surgery in China versus 5,000 in the United States. In other words, the coverage of cataract surgical care is about 10% of that in the United States. That tallies to 700,000 cataract surgeries (patients) or 1.4 million procedures (eyes) performed each year in China, with a backlog of 5 million cases. If not one new cataract formed starting today, 3 years would pass before all of China’s current cataract patients were treated. Even patients with advanced cataracts (20/200 or worse BCVA) generally wait 2 years for surgery.

**HEALTH CARE REFORM**

With the increase in the standard of living in China, citizens are now demanding much higher-quality health care. A year ago, the Chinese government unveiled an ambitious plan: $123 billion in funding to provide universal health care to its citizens within the next 10 years.

Those involved in US health care can participate in China’s reform. Specifically, these opportunities include:
- training and education
- importing advanced medical technologies into China
- organizing medical records systems and managerial structures
- establishing a medical-legal infrastructure
- engaging in real estate development and hospital management
- making investments and forming joint partnerships
- educating the public about eye disease, its prevention, and treatment
- participating in charitable medical work

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Rhein Medical Introduces the Maskin Meibum Expressor

Rhein Medical (St. Petersburg, FL) introduced the Maskin Meibum Expressor, which was developed in coordination with Steven L. Maskin, MD. The instrument is designed to remove meibum from lids. To express meibum, advance and squeeze from the deep lid to the lid margin. The rollers increase pressure in the tarsal plate, advancing meibum through the orifice. The diamond knurling on the rollers prevents slippage and enables the instrument to engage and roll against the smooth conjunctiva without abrading the mucosal surface, according to the company.

For more information, visit rheinmedical.com.

Alcon Launches New Multipurpose Disinfecting Solution

Alcon Laboratories, Inc. (Fort Worth, TX), launches its new contact lens solution, Opti-Free PureMoist Multipurpose Disinfecting Solution, in the United States. Opti-Free PureMoist contains Alcon’s wetting agent HydraGlyde Moisture Matrix, which is designed to provide 16 hours of lens wettability by embedding itself on and within the lens’ surface, according to a company news release. This environment and the solution’s ability to remove protein deposits and reduce lipid deposition facilitate moisture and comfort, according to a company news release.

For more information, visit opti-free.com.

Vistakon Launches Healthy Vision Radio Program

Vistakon Pharmaceuticals, LLC (Jacksonville, FL), a division of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., announced the launch of “Healthy Vision with Val Jones, MD,” a new radio program devoted to educating and improving the eye health of Americans.

Healthy Vision with Dr. Jones seeks to close the gap between vision care attitudes and behaviors by providing consumers with timely and relevant information and helpful resources to assist the management of eye health for themselves and their families, according to a news release. The program is supported by Vistakon’s Acuvue brand contact lenses.

Free podcasts of Healthy Vision with Dr. Jones can be found in the iTunes store or at getbetterhealth.com/healthy-vision.

Optos Announces Nonexecutive Board Directors

Optos (Scotland, United Kingdom), a retinal imaging company, announced that John Goddard and David Wilson have been appointed to its board as nonexecutive directors effective immediately. Mr. Goddard has had a career in the global pharmaceuticals industry, the majority of which was with AstraZeneca LP (London, United Kingdom), where he was ultimately head of Group Strategic Planning. David Wilson has 26 years of experience and is currently deputy chief executive of the investment banking business at Matrix Group (Arlington, VA).

Noninvasive Light Therapy Helps Stroke Survivors Regain Lost Vision

In honor of National Stroke Awareness Month, NovaVision, Inc. (Boca Raton, FL), is featuring inspirational vision recovery stories of stroke survivors on its Web site. Survivors’ stories focus on Vision Restoration Therapy (VRT) and how the noninvasive treatment course improved their sight and overall quality of life.

“While science shows that the brain can produce minimal spontaneous recovery within the first few months after a stroke occurs, some patients plateau and the words ‘there’s nothing else that can be done’ can be extremely disheartening,” said Tom Bridges, NovaVision’s vice president of sales and marketing, in a company news release. “VRT is a noninvasive approach to ‘rewire’ the visual nerves, aiming the healthy neurons to perform the function of those damaged or destroyed by a stroke—resulting in a wider visual field.”

For more information on VRT and to read the stories, please visit novavision.com.
**My Experience**

During the past decade, I have assisted with the development of the Aier Eye Hospital Group. I am a co-owner of Aier and the international president of its flagship hospital, Shanghai Aier Eye Hospital (www.aier021.com). My colleagues and I imported advanced US medical technologies with which we equipped all of the Aier hospitals. We led the way in introducing new technologies to China such as LASIK with the flap created using a femtosecond laser (I performed the first such procedure in China at the Shanghai Aier Eye Hospital in 2005 [Figure 1]).

My colleagues and I have been actively involved in ophthalmic education and training in China. For example, several months ago, John Marshall, PhD, and I led a regional teaching course for ophthalmologists at Shanghai Aier Hospital. At the September 2010 Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress (APAO) in Beijing, Aier had the highest number of abstracts presented (more than 200) of all the hospitals in China. Aier provides charitable medical care for individuals in the poorest counties and provinces in the country, and its surgeons perform more than 10,000 charitable cataract procedures annually.

The Aier Eye Hospital Group is currently the largest private eye hospital group in China, with 30 freestanding eye hospitals. In 2010, surgeons at its facilities performed 80,000 LASIK procedures (eyes)—10% of China’s entire volume. China surpassed the United States for the first time in 2010 in total annual LASIK volume, with more than 800,000 cases (eyes). In that year, the Aier Eye Hospital Group’s ophthalmologists performed 70,000 cataract surgeries (eyes), which is 5% of China’s annual surgical volume (1.4 million eyes).

**Conclusion**

At present, the quality of primary medical care in China is significantly lower than in the United States. With its rapidly growing economy and ambitious effort at health care reform, however, China now offers unparalleled opportunities in primary medical care to US doctors and businesses. Moreover, China appears capable of funding this reform, thanks to a huge trade surplus with the rest of the world, including the United States.

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