

US surgeons return to help the disabled

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HA NOI — A delegation of surgeons from the United States arrived in Viet Nam last week to carry out high-tech surgery that will help more than 60 disabled patients walk again.

Delegation head Dr Naomi Shields said most of the patients to be operated on were children with lower limb difficulties.

"We will operate on 30 patients with disabilities in the central city of Vinh, 15 in northern Ha Tay Province's Ba Vi District, 15 in the northern city of Thai Nguyen and four in Ha Noi during our four-week trip to Viet Nam," said Shields, who is the Chairwoman of the Outreach and Education Fund.

"We are happy to watch our patients' long-term recovery."

Dr Shields was speaking last weekend in Ha Noi at the fourth annual American-Vietnamese seminar, which was attended by more than 200 doctors and surgeons from both Viet Nam and the United States.

"We are also happy with the surgical skills of our Vietnamese colleagues, particularly those at the Viet -Duc Hospital and Vinh Orthopaedic and Rehabilitation Centre," said Shields.

"Their skills have improved so much."

The seminar aimed to provide a forum for the exchange of views between doctors and surgeons and provide local doctors with new information on surgery and rehabilitation techniques.

Dr Shields expressed thanks to local doctors, saying "they are teaching us more than we are teaching them."

Dr Ngo Toan from Viet Duc Hospital said he valued the important assistance of the US surgeons.

"Local medical workers have learned a lot about modern surgery from the US surgeons while they in turn learned a lot about traditional Vietnamese operations," said Toan.

He called on other medical associations all over the world to assist Vietnamese patients suffering from disabilities.

The US surgery team includes Robert Veith, Thomas Lee, Ruth Thomas, Roretta Chou and Nimrod Ron.

The seminar was jointly held by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, the Health Ministry's Viet Duc Hospital, the Prosthetic Outreach Foundation (POF) and the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society(AOFAS).

The Vietnamese-American humanitarian programme started more than 14 years ago, and since then, nearly 14,000 children and hundreds of disabled adults, including athletes and poor women, have been supplied with artificial limbs and have undergone rehabilitation free of charge.

This is the fifth trip by Naomi Shields and her US colleagues to Viet Nam.— VNS
