

VIETNAM DOCTORS SEEKING U.S. ROLE

Refugees Back to Studies to Gain Certification

COLUMBUS, Ohio, Dec. 9 (AP) — Dr. Tien Trong Vu delivered 50 babies in his native Vietnam but was not allowed to deliver his own daughter just after he reached American soil.

Dr. Vu is among some 425 Vietnamese physicians who have become refugees in the United States, but none of them can practice medicine here yet because they lack certification.

A spokesman for the American Medical Association says it will be two to three years before any of the Vietnamese doctors will be ready to practice. Many are studying to obtain American medical licenses and working at whatever jobs they can get.

Dr. Vu, 28 years old, says he

will need several years before he can become fully certified. He and a colleague, Dr. Nguyen Hoai Trung, 25, are earning \$3 an hour now as medical assistants at the suburban Westerville Convalescent Center. Meanwhile, they are studying at night in their rented homes here for the foreign medical graduate examination they will take in January.

Training After Exam

The exam is given by the Educational Commission for Foreign Graduates to any graduate of a foreign medical school who wants to continue his training in this country. Once they pass, Dr. Vu and Dr. Trung, who have a fair command of English, as do many of the refugee doctors, will be eligible for an internship or a residency. They must work under supervision for at least a year before they can apply to a state licensing board to practice as physicians.

Dr. Ira Singer, director of the Vietnam Medical School project of the American Medical Association, says that none of the 425 refugee physicians "is

out practicing medicine without supervision; no one is in a small town practicing medicine on his own."

But 33 Vietnamese doctors who had been training in the United States when Saigon fell have been granted temporary licenses to continue their training, Dr. Singer said. Thirty to 40 others have passed the commission exam and thus have qualified to train as internes or residents or in some other supervised program.

Some are working as orderlies or as waiters or as medical assistants, as Dr. Vu is doing, while waiting to qualify for training positions, Dr. Singer said. "Many others are now in small communities. I don't think they know what they're doing there. I think they are assisting physicians. But they don't know how to get out of the trap they're in."

Dr. Vu, who was graduated from the Saigon University Medical School, practiced medicine for five years in Vietnam as a general physician. He specialized in microbiology, obstetrics and gynecology while

an interne at Cho Ray and Hung Vuong Hospitals, two of Saigon's biggest.

During 1974, he was head of the county hospital in Vinh Long Province in the Mekong Delta south of Saigon. He treated 100 patients a day, he says. He was the only doctor in the province, which had a population of 50,000.

Dr. Vu, his wife and his three-year-old son left Saigon's Son Nhut Air Base on April 28, on one of the last United States evacuation flights before Saigon fell on April 30. "After we took off," he recalls, "the Communists launched rockets at the air base. We were very lucky. My wife was pregnant."

Two days later, on May 1, Dr. Vu arrived at Guam, where the daughter, named Jacqueline, was born at a United States Navy hospital.

Dr. Vu's parents are also living in Columbus. His father, an examiner for the National Bank of Vietnam, is looking for a job.

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