

## Medical conference tackles family healthcare issues



Participants pose for a photo after the conference.

### Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth

Medical personnel and representatives from development partners and line departments of the Ministry of Health met in Vientiane yesterday for the 10th annual Family Medicine Specialists (FMS) Conference.

FMS are medical practitioners serving patients in local communities, and take pride in providing personalised care for families.

President of the Health Professional Council, Dr Ponmek Dalalay, and specialists from four hospitals in Savannakhet, Khammuan, Champassak and Vientiane provinces attended the conference, which was supported by the University of Calgary, Canada, and Rotary International.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, President of the University of Health Sciences, Dr Phouthone Vangkonevilay, said FMS doctors work on the front lines of healthcare across the country.

"They are often the first doctors to see a patient, especially in the rural areas of Laos and are known as primary care doctors," he said.

"They train to be primary care doctors, with 5-star skills: medical expert, teacher, manager, community leader, and researcher," he added.

The University of Health Sciences has trained over 220 Family Medicine Specialists, most of whom work in rural areas and are dedicated to delivering excellent healthcare.

The annual FMS conference provides an

opportunity for those who have finished their training and those still in training to learn new skills and meet to discuss how to continue to improve patient care in rural areas.

Together they also celebrate the most crucial part of their profession: taking excellent care of their patients.

According to the ministry, in 2005, the University of Health Sciences in collaboration with the University of Calgary developed a programme to train FMS to work in provincial and district hospitals.

These doctors receive their medical degrees in Vientiane, but then undergo focused training for two more years to become specialists in family medicine.