Bio-absorbable stents bring Aussie docs to India

Mumbai: Dr Craig Juergens, a senior cardiologist practising in Sydney, stopped by in Mumbai for an unusual cause: learning the use of bio-absorbable stent in patients with complex heart disease.

Two fellow Australians—Dr Robert Lew from Victoria and Dr Peter Larsen from Birtinya—joined Juergens on Monday and Tuesday to observe city cardiologist Dr A V Ganesh Kumar perform seven complex angioplasties that need over 20 bio-absorbable stents.

This ‘Go East’ episode has a simple reason: the new stent has been in use in India for three years now but Dr Lew got a licence for its use in Australia less than a year back. “Only Germany has used more bio-absorbable stents than Indian cardiologists, around 20,000 to our 13,000. Clearly, Indian doctors are over the learning curve,” said Dr Kumar.

If any of the patients operated on in these two days had come to us in Australia, we would have sent them for a bypass surgery. We had not considered these new stents could be used in complex manifestations of heart disease,” said Dr Larsen.

While it’s common to hear Indian doctors going abroad for training, there clearly is a ‘reverse’ trend as well: a small but growing number of foreigners come to India to pick up trends in medical practice. A factor feeding this trend is the relatively quicker approvals to medical devices and techniques in India than, say, in the US. In the past, doctors have travelled to India for fellowship with renowned heart surgeons.