

14 – 12 – 2006

A Project of the Children First and Kind Cuts for Kids Foundation, together with the Palestinian Community

The Second Australian Humanitarian Mission



The Children First Project started in March, 2004 by the visit of Moira Kelly and Philip Sacca who presented the Australian Children First Foundation (CFF) and the Palestinian community in Melbourne to the Union of Health Work Committees (UHC) in Gaza Strip. The project aims to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian sick children who have congenital anomalies or who were victims of the repeated Israeli assaults. It also helps increase the knowledge and skills of the local medical staff who assist the Australian Professors in their work. Seven children were sent to Melbourne where five of them underwent sophisticated surgeries and four more will be sent in April, 2007. The project expanded - thanks to the efforts of Moira and Philip - who contacted Professor Paddy Dewan the chairman of Kind Cuts for Kids who lead the First Australian Humanitarian Mission (FAHM) in August, 2005 and who will lead the third mission (TAHM) in February 2007. On FAHM, 43 sophisticated surgeries were performed and 95 cases were assessed and helped in the outpatient department of Al Awda hospital (UHC). Thanks to the UHC chairman and board of directors for their marvelous major role in this project. They have put this project on top of their agenda. The UHC supports this project financially, socially, and through the use of its centers. I'd like to also thank other partners who had their share in this project:

- 1- The Islamic Council of Victoria which donated 9500 A\$ for FAHM .
- 2- The Palestinian Charity Association which donated 9700 A\$ for SAHM and TAHM.
- 3- Al Awda hospital staff for their marvelous assistance and care of the children.
- 4- Sunrise hospital for donating some medical supplies.
- 5- Emirates airlines for donating plane tickets.
- 6- Beit Jala Australian Palestinian Association presented by its president Mr. Philip Sacca.
- 7- Canberra general hospital for donating some surgical instruments.
- 8- J&J medical corporation in Canberra for donating some medical supplies.
- 9- Professor David Croaker who represented Kind Cuts for Kids for sponsoring his time and skill for our ill children.
- 10- Professor Errol Simpson who represented Kind Cuts for Kids for sponsoring his time and skill for our ill children.
- 11- The Australian Professors in Melbourne who operate on our kids there.
- 12- The volunteers who stay with our children during their hospitalization in the different Australian hospitals.

The Second Australian Humanitarian Mission (SAHM) is a continuum of the Children First Project. Professor David Croaker and Professor Errol Simpson represented Kind Cuts For Kids on this mission where they performed 44 sophisticated surgeries for 43 patients (41 kids and 2 adults) who suffered from congenital anomalies in the genito-urinary system and lower gastro-intestinal tract. Also 50 cases were assessed at Al Awda's outpatient department. The new list for the third mission is ready and contains 46 cases (anticipating an increase in this list).

Professor David arrived on 11 – 11 – 2006 and he started operating next morning where Prof Simpson arrived on 19 – 11 – 2006 and started operating next morning as well. The patients were called in from the list prepared last year after the first mission ended in addition to new cases that came to the outpatient department and needed surgeries. Also some operated on cases from the first visit were called in for follow up where some of them underwent further surgical intervention and medical investigation indicating the continuity of care. The two Professors left Gaza on 23 – 11 – 2006.

During this mission, we've encountered some interesting cases such as deformed external genitalia for a 30 year old man who was seeking help abroad. Professor David performed the first stage of the needed surgeries and next year Professor Paddy will do the next stage for him. This guy is looking forward to restore his manhood and marry the girl he loves as he told me. Another case was a 16 year old girl who also suffered from the same problem and was never diagnosed. Professor David performed a diagnostic procedure in theater where he diagnosed the problem and on the second day he fixed it. The girl's family were really happy to know that their child is 100% girl and there is nothing wrong with her feminine features.

Many Hypospadias repairs were performed where more than half of them were operated on before in other health facilities. This condition leads to recurrent urinary tract infections and sterility. These cases are only an example of the long list of cases which suffer from terrible conditions that directly affect the children's life.

SAHM operated under difficult circumstances imposed by the Israeli assaults on North Gaza Strip where Al Awda hospital is located (namely; neighboring Sheikh Zayed city, Beit Lahia, and East Jabalia). The Israeli tanks were few blocks away from the hospital shooting from heavy machine guns in addition to some heavy artillery shelling and helicopters aerial attacks. Despite this scary environment, the two Professors kept performing efficiently disregarding and overcoming their fear.

Al Awda hospital team worked efficiently with the Professors and in handling the Palestinian serious casualties rushing into its emergency room. This proves the

great determination, skill, and devotion of the hospital's team. The team had to equally divide their effort between the serious Palestinian casualties and the children operated on or undergoing surgeries by the Aussie team. Each received excellent care and were looked after pretty well. The hospital's administration increased the number of employees per shift through the visit – practically declared code blue (extreme emergency condition). Most elective surgeries were postponed.

The Union's chairman and board of directors held a reception and an honoring party for our valuable guests showing the really great Palestinian hospitality. The team with the other guests enjoyed the Palestinian folk dance (Dabka) performed by the Union's folk band. Our Professors joined the kids in the dance and I believe everybody had a good time.

The work plan went really smooth despite the bad uncomfortable surrounding circumstances. All surgeries were performed for free. Each procedure's average cost is **1200 USD** including the Aussie team's accommodation, laboratory investigations, special x-rays, theater entrance, food, overtime hours, transportation, and admission days.

The total cost for the 44 performed surgical procedures is **(52 800 USD)**. The UHWC until the writing of this report paid **(47 800 USD)**. **(5000 USD)** were donated medical supplies and instruments from Canberra hospital and J&J medical supply corporation in Canberra. Most of these procedures would cost 7500 to 10000 USD abroad discounting the accommodations needed and the trouble of leaving Gaza since the crossings are closed most of the time.

Finally, we are looking forward for the Third Australian Humanitarian Mission (FAHM) lead by Professor Paddy Dewan in February, 2007 hoping that some other charity associations will help the UHWC financially since those surgeries cost lots of money as you've noticed.

Signed;

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