Medical Mission Trips

Gaza Strip


Nedaa Skeik, MD, FACC, FACP, FSVM, RPVI
Professor of Medicine
Section Head, Vascular Medicine
Medical Director, Thrombophilia/Anticoagulation Clinic
Medical Director, Vein Center
Medical Director, Vascular Laboratory
Minneapolis Heart Institute® Abbott Northwestern Hospital

Disclosures

Consulting and speaking for Pfizer, J&J, A.Z., NNI, and BSC
Medical mission fund from Medtronic

No financial conflict related to this talk

Information: WHO and local health systems
Successful Medical Mission

- **Location**: accessibility, safety, accommodation
- **Patients**: most in need
- **Logistics**:
  - Coordination with local health teams
  - Sponsoring health organization
  - Equipment and supplies
  - Staff
  - Time and weather
- **Fund**: self or organizational (Volunteer Match/Allina)
- **Physician**:
  - Experience (limited resources and hardship)
  - Unbiased...

Map

[Map showing locations in Israel, West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights]
Palestinian Population

- Total: ~ 13.5 M as of 2020
- Palestinian Territories as of 2021: 5,222,748
  - West Bank: 3,120,448 (792,081 refugees)
  - Gaza Strip: 2,106,745 (1,311,920 refugees)
- 1948 occupied territories as of 2020: ~ 1.6 M
- Refugees outside Palestinian Territories as of 2020: ~ 6.5 million
- As of 2016
  - Jordan: 2,144,233
  - Syria 560,000
  - Lebanon: 458,369
  - USA: 255,000

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinians
Gaza Strip

- Area: 378 km²
- 2,106,745 (~1.5 million refugees) as of 2021
- Tight closure since June 2006
- Five Major Military Campaigns:
  - 2008-2009
  - March 2012
  - October 2012
  - July 2014
  - May 2021
Gaza Strip Under Strict Closure

- Electrical power outage: ~ 20 hours a day!
- Food insecurity: 50-60%
- Less than 10% of municipality water is drinkable
- High unemployment (>Rwanda) and extreme poverty
- Resources and coping mechanisms already exhausted
- Industrial, agricultural, financial and business aspects of life are collapsing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Gaza</th>
<th>Selected Arab Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population density per km²</td>
<td>4279</td>
<td>44 in Morocco; 111 in Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>30-40%</td>
<td>Syria, 12; Egypt 10, Tunisia 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below poverty line (fluctuating)</td>
<td>40-85%</td>
<td>24% in Lebanon; 30% in Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult literacy rate (above 15 years old)</td>
<td>95.5%</td>
<td>80% in Syria, Lebanon 60% in Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health expenditure</td>
<td>8-11%</td>
<td>9% in Jordan, 3.7% Egypt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Same; 73-74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refugee Camps
Palestinian Children Completing Homework with Candlelight During Power Outage in Gaza City

Children & Poverty
Youth with Hopeless Future

Health System Under Closure

• Health system in Gaza is close to collapse due to electricity crisis
• Hospitals could be in complete darkness any time
• Hospitals reliant on emergency generators for up to 20 hours a day
• About 500,000 liters of fuel are required a month to sustain critical care
• Power outage has made it harder to store blood products.
• Sanitation workers were on strike due to payment cut
Health System Has Been Under Attack

Residential Buildings Targeted
Physicians Lost Their Lives: Dr. Ayman Abu Al Ouf

Medical Supply Shortage

• At least 200 babies in ICUs waiting a fatal outcome
• Many dialysis and ventilator patients' lives in jeopardy
• ORs lack sterilization and operation equipment
• Critical medications shortage
• November 2017: 43% of total essential drugs and 48% of ED and ICU drugs were at zero stock

Courtesy: WHO office in Gaza
Medication Shortage

Operation Rooms Without Power
Limited Access to Health Care

- October 2017: 45% of urgent health related travel permits were denied by the Israeli authorities.
- Palestinian authority failed to cover many health referral costs outside of Gaza
- At least 30 deaths in 2017 due to travel ban
- Several hospitals have shut down due to limited resources
- The UN is calling for $374m to meet humanitarian needs in the Gaza Strip

Premature Babies Squeezed in one Incubator at Shifa Hospital in Gaza
Leading Causes of Death Among the Entire Population in 2009

- Trauma: 23.5%
- Heart Diseases: 17.1%
- Perinatal Conditions: 12.1%
- Neoplasm: 8.4%
- Congenital Malformation: 6.1%
- Cerebrovascular conditions: 6.0%
- Septicemia: 4.8%
- Hypertension: 4.4%
- Respiratory conditions: 3.8%
- Senility: 2.7%

Courtesy: WHO office in Gaza

Medical Missions

- The Palestinian Children Relief Fund (www.PCRF.net)

- Over the past 6 years, over 500 medical teams including thousands of volunteers from all over the world have travelled to the Middle East through the PCRF to treat thousands of children

- In 2017: 127 medical missions, 2347 patients screened, 1284 patients operated on with 326 medical volunteers
Gaza PCRF Office Destroyed in Air-strike

Rafah Crossing Borders
Very Limited Access Over Years
Patients Waiting to Cross

Allenby Bridge Crossing Point
Patient with KTS

Exam Room
Exam Room

Summer 2015

Exam Room

Summer 2015
Shifa Hospital Procedure Room

Shifa Hospital Procedure Room
Shifa Hospital OR

Shifa Hospital OR
Vascular Surgery Head/Shifa Hospital

2021 Medical Mission, Shifa Hospital
Venous Stasis Ulcer

Shifa Procedure Room
Shifa Procedure Room

Al-Azhar University Medical Student
Al-Azhar University Education Staff

City of Gaza
City of Gaza

Gaza Port
UNRWA Elementary and Middle Schools, Gaza

Shajaiye Refugee Camp from Montar Height
Thank You!

- Volunteer Match/ Allina
- PCRF
- Medtronic
- Family (wife..)