

SCOTTISH PALESTINIAN HEALTH FACULTY



NEWSLETTER NO 6

Welcome to the 6th newsletter of the Scottish Palestinian Health Faculty – 40 pages continuing to share the experience and views of Scottish and Palestinian health professionals.

Every Palestinian has a story to tell but some are more dramatic than others. Ali Hamad's story of how he became a medical student at Glasgow University takes some beating (as did he) in an amazing tale of fortitude and perseverance (Page 9)

As usual the newsletter includes reports of Scottish health professionals travelling to the West Bank and Gaza as part of MAP-sponsored missions, but this edition also features visits which were independent of MAP including Alison Phipps' work with refugees in Gaza (Page 12) and David Sedgwicks long term involvement in surgical skills training (Page 18). These have both been long journeys with Palestinian colleagues.

The travel is not all one way, however, and the newsletter records visits to Scotland by Dr Khamis Elessi (See newsletter No 5) and Dr Saffana Ajweh for a Clinical Observership (Page 24).

Professor Ghassan Abu-Sittah, lately of the American University of Beirut, describes his encounters with Runa Mackay early in his career, and late in hers, when he was a Glasgow medical student (Page 5).

Dr Roddy O'Kane, a Glasgow neurosurgeon describes his visits to Gaza (Page 27) while Dr Janet Litherland describes a breast cancer mission to the West Bank (Page 32).

The longest journey with Palestinians, however, is Professor John Macdonald's 40 year relationship with the Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University. In this issue he is looking for crowd funding to help support a study of the health of Palestinian prisoners and their families (Page 15).

Following the successful 12th scientific conference of the Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance, held virtually on 21-23 November, the newsletter includes the conference programme for each of the three days including a web link to video recordings (Page 34).

Finally, Melanie Coyne sends news from MAP (Page 38).

In summary, this 6th SPHF Newsletter is faithful to our aims :-

- To promote Scottish Palestinian health collaboration
- To support the development of health and health care in Palestine

which we hope to achieve by :-

- connecting Scottish and Palestinian colleagues working in the health field
- sharing experience, information, evidence, views and plans
- developing new activities involving Scottish Palestinian health collaboration
- supporting Palestinian health professionals and researchers visiting Scotland
- raising the profile and impact of Scottish Palestinian health collaboration

Previous newsletters (1-5) can be accessed on the Scottish Palestinian Forum website at <http://www.scottishpalestinianforum.org.uk/scottish-palestinian-health-faculty-newsletters>

Graham Watt

graham.watt@glasgow.ac.uk

December 2022



Christmas Greetings from the Professor of Cuning at Glasgow University

CONTENTS	PAGE
Postscript	
Celebrating Runa Mackay	4
The Runa Mackay Lecture	4
Remembering Runa Mackay	5
Collage	7
New MAP CEO	8
Medical studies, starting in Damascus, ending in Glasgow	9
Applied Linguistics in Gaza	12
The Health of Palestinian Prisoners	15
The Journey: Surgical Skills Teaching in Palestine	18
A Clinical Observership in Scotland	24
Neurosurgical Mission to Gaza	27
Dr Khamis Elessi Visits Scotland	31
Breast Cancer Mission to the West Bank with MAP	32
The 12 th Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance Conference	34
MAP News	38
About the SPHF	40

CELEBRATING RUNA MACKAY



An event to celebrate the life, work and example of Dr Runa Mackay was held in the Playfair Library at the University of Edinburgh on October 20th 2022. A report including the text and pictures from the many presentations is being prepared and will be disseminated soon. The presentation by Professor Ghassan Abu-Sittah is included in this newsletter.

THE RUNA MACKAY LECTURE 2022

The first Runa Mackay Lecture, "*A Personal Journey with the Palestinians*", was given by Dr Philippa Whitford MP on Thursday 20th October 2022 in the Playfair Library at the University of Edinburgh. It is hoped to arrange a second Runa Mackay Lecture in 2023.



Philippa is pictured above, standing with Dr Ang Swee Chai, who was present in Shatilla Camp in Beirut at the time of the massacre of Palestinians in 1982 and who co-founded MAP in 1984

REMEMBERING RUNA MACKAY

It was during my second year of medical school in Glasgow in 1989 that I was asked to join Scottish Medical Aid for Palestinians. Pam Lister who unfortunately recently passed away, had founded it with Runa to support the work of MAP in London.

It was there that I first met Runa. She was finishing up her degree in Arabic at Edinburgh University and was in between missions to South Lebanon.

I was immediately struck by her quiet strength, the way she was always understated even when describing what can only be described as acts of bravery.

Over many events and meetings I got to know Runa. Her decision to go to Palestine in 1954 to work in Nazareth as a young doctor was described to me in matter-of-fact detail. In summer 1992 she was kind enough to allow me to join her in South Lebanon working in a mobile clinic serving unrecognized Palestinian refugee camps and Lebanese villages in the area immediately adjacent to the Israeli occupied part of South Lebanon. She would spend the week running clinics in these camps and villages driving her station-wagon from place to another in an area frequently shelled by the Israeli army.

It was during that summer that I learnt from Runa things to which the humanitarian sector would only later ascribe names and descriptions.

She always gave agency to her patients and insisted that they made the final decision and that she was only there to give advice and help. Her kindness and dedication was always apparent.

She knew the names of patients and their families, the staff in the clinics and their kids and her colleagues in the area. She could remember everybody's name and spoke to them with such kindness and humility that for them she was a member of their communities.

One night a child that she had treated for his blood condition, Sickle Cell anaemia, was admitted to the hospital in Burj Al-Shamali in excruciating pain associated with a sickle crisis. She stayed all night titrating the pain relief to the child until he finally managed to sleep in the early hours of the morning.

She later told me that she had a list of all the families with this hereditary disease and would visit them when she had free time to check up on them.

Throughout Runa's life, her religious belief was the most revolutionary thing about her. It shaped her sense of justice and her duty to defend the humanity of others that was being violated. It took her to projects in Hebron and Gaza before she retired from clinical work.

Her steely determination, her kindness and empathy and her ability to find the common humanity with her patients were founded on her faith but were always so understated and matter of fact.

Runa lived an outstanding life dedicated to helping others in the face of great dangers. She always did that in a matter of fact way because for her it all seemed very simple. It was the right thing to do. My life is richer because I met Runa at a critical stage. She taught me medicine as it should be practiced and in the process she shaped my future choices. I will forever be indebted to her.



Ghassan Abu-Sittah was until recently Professor of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the American University of Beirut and has been a frequent visitor to the West Bank and Gaza, especially to help Palestinian doctors treat war injuries.

EDITOR'S NOTE : See also the video clip of Ghassan's presentation on "*The Sum of All Our Struggles: Palestinian Refugees after the Third Exile*", which is 2h 18min into the videolink at the top of page 35, covering the second day of the 12th LPHA Conference

This collage in memory of Runa Mackay was created by her friend Lizzie Findlay.



NEW MAP CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The new Chief Executive of MAP is Melanie Ward, originally from Helensburgh but with a long and impressive track record of working in international development and aid, most recently as the UK Executive Director of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). She is pictured below with Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, at a recent MAP reception in the House of Commons.



In other MAP news, Andy Ferguson, originally from Inverness, has stepped down as MAP's Director of Programmes, and among his other activities is taking up the Chief Executive position for the Foundation for Family Medicine in Palestine.



MEDICAL STUDIES, STARTING IN DAMASCUS, ENDING IN GLASGOW

Abu Dhabi, The 26th of June 1991. A new baby came into this world, That baby was me. The second child of a Palestinian family. However, not the Palestinian Palestinian! But Palestinian in a very annoying way to the whole world. Why?! Because my family is from a village called Al-Safsaf in the province of Safad in the northern part of Palestine which is a part of the Zionist entity now. And as long as people like us exist, and as long as we hold on to our right to return to our homeland, the legitimacy of the illegitimate Zionist entity remains under attack.

Only 6 months after my birth, my family, along with many Palestinian families were expelled from the UAE in retaliation for the official Palestinian support to Iraq during the Gulf war. We returned to Syria where we had refugee status and spent most of our life in Al-Yarmouk camp. A small town on the outskirts of Damascus, that was built for Palestinian refugees in early 1950s. I studied in the UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East) schools. I was accepted in medicine school in Damascus in 2009.



In March 2011, the Syrian revolution erupted, and demonstrations stormed the whole country. The Syrian regime encountered civilian protesters with arms and fire resulting in a huge number of casualties. Hospitals were not an option for injured people as each hospital had a military unit whose job was arresting people from A&E departments. Furthermore, many doctors fled the country. Therefore, us, medical students had to step up.

We secretly organised ourselves into groups and established some field hospitals. We smuggled medical supplies to seized areas. This was the reason I was arrested in 2014. I spent three years in jail. For the first ten months, I was in an underground military prison in which detainees faced hell. I won't go through the torture details, but I'll let you know that out of 512 detainees, only six of us survived.

In 2017, I was released on bail following a king ransom bribe paid by my uncle. Three weeks after my release, I received a letter from the regime to join the mandatory military service. I did not want to switch teams from saving people's lives to killing them so I had to smuggle myself to Turkey.

The journey was not easy, especially with my old mother accompanying me. We had to go through military checkpoints, cross frontlines between the regime and the Free Syrian army, climb a 4-meter wall on the border between Syria and Turkey, and avoid the Turkish border patrols. We were shot at among other difficulties on that trip.

We stayed in Turkey for six months. I applied to universities there, but I was not accepted anywhere. I then almost like a miracle, was given a leave to enter the UK. My father, brother and sister who were already granted asylum (at separate times and interesting stories of each) applied a reunion application for my mother and myself via Red Cross and it was accepted, despite me being over 18 years old! I had no passport and I entered the UK using a single-page special document issued by the home office.

I had no permit to work and no right of any sort so I ended up claiming asylum in the UK. I had to move between cities: Belfast, Bolton, London, Liverpool, and Manchester. After finally receiving my residence permit, and enjoying some peace of mind, I started pursuing my dream of becoming a doctor, but the reality was shocking. Since I did not finish my university in Syria, my certificate was not recognised. Some people who arrived in the UK before me suggested taking the A-level, while others said I must go through access to medicine program. But most voices were telling me to give up, find a job and quit studying.

None of that felt doable for me. Therefore, I spent my 2019 summer emailing the admission offices at each and every university in the UK. I travelled across the country to several universities to attend their open days and meet staff in person.

In July 2019, a glimmer of hope emerged. An email from Glasgow university asking me to provide extra documents to study my application more thoroughly. A week later, I was invited to an online meeting after which I received a conditional offer. I had to pass the English competency test and provide a certificate in a month. Bearing in mind that results need two weeks to be issued, I had only two weeks to book and prepare.

I searched the whole UK for an exam centre and the only available one was in Edinburgh. Felt like I am bound to like Scotland! I luckily passed my exam at the first -and only possible- attempt.



On the 28th of August the long-awaited email arrived. Congratulations, you have been accepted to the university of Glasgow!! Hooray!!!

That was the most amazing news since I arrived in the UK. My whole family were celebrating. I was to start in Glasgow on the 5th of September.

A completely new city, no accommodation, no relatives or friends (yet) and not enough money either. Just plenty of faith.

Although the deadline for applications was exceeded, the university accommodation team kindly considered my circumstances and offered me a room in one of their flats. I applied for a student loan which usually takes about 6 weeks to be issued, if accepted. But one more gift was there for me!

One of my uncles kindly offered to help me with the first payment until the loan is issued. I enrolled, days passed, and here I am now, in my fourth year!

It was a long journey and I know there is more to come. However, this journey taught me to strive and never give up, to pursue my passion with all of my soul, and that no matter how hard or impossible things are, ease will always follow. Always. Like a ray of sunshine after the rain.

Ali Hamad
4th year medical student
University of Glasgow



APPLIED LINGUISTICS IN GAZA

Over the last twelve years I've been co-leading projects working with my colleague Dr Nazmi Al Masri at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG), Palestine.

Nazmi is an incredible man of peace with an astute and often playful vision of a better world in the worst of circumstances. Through his acuity and analysis of what academics might do together to overcome conditions of siege and prevent the spirals of violence, especially in young people and young graduates, we've bid for funding repeatedly, and repeatedly hosted projects in the Strip.



Our first project, led by Keith Hammond in Continuing Education at the University of Glasgow was entitled Life-Long Learning in Palestine, funded by the European Union. Through it and through work at IUG we came, together, to understand the extent of the curse of unemployment for a people under siege. The violence of unemployment extends both inwards in mental despair and hopelessness and outwards in adoption of violent actions for people who can see no solution but the use of violence. The IUG team had different ideas and worked in the spaces between despair to foster confidence and

possibility in young people, designing incubator programmes for small graduate-run businesses. They become exercised by the situation of young graduate women, and on disabilities of various kinds acting as barriers.

Nazmi and I are both linguists and educators by training, in part at least. Our second project – Researching Multilingually at Borders, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council began by developing a pilot training programme for English language graduates for offering online teaching of English. This programme was destroyed during the 2014 war on Gaza. UNWRA – the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine and the Near East assessed the effects of the 2014 war as follows:

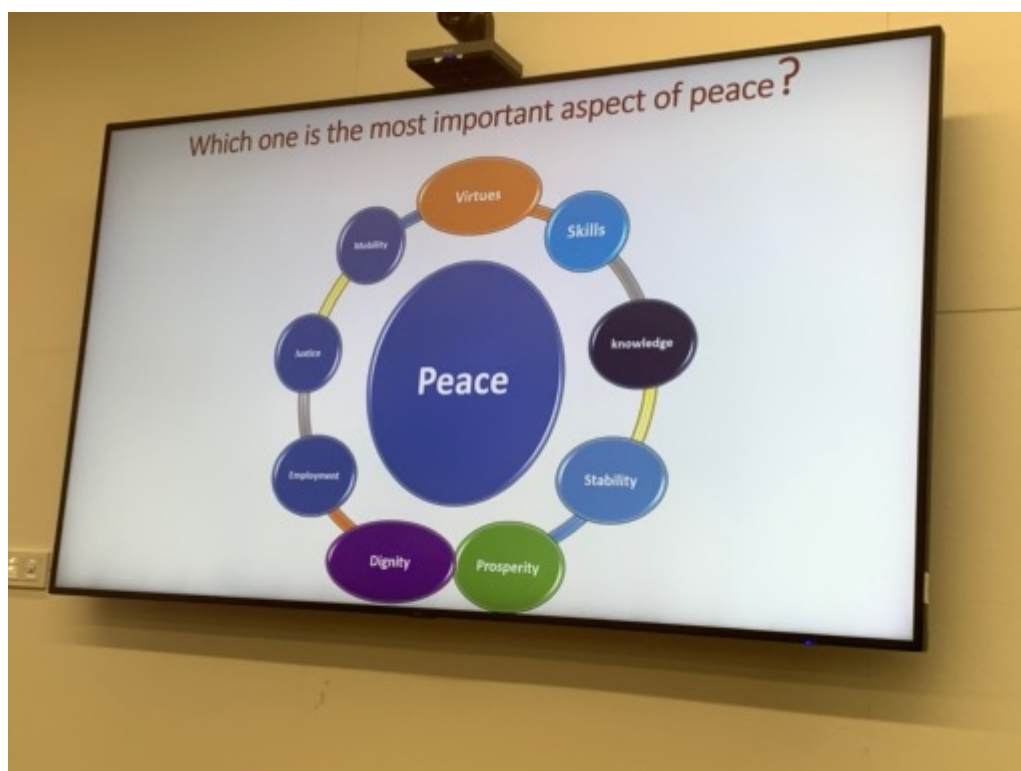
“The scale of human loss, destruction, devastation and displacement caused by the 2014 conflict in Gaza – the third within seven years – was catastrophic, unprecedented and unparalleled in Gaza, since at least the start of the Israeli occupation in 1967 and further eroded whatever resilience the people in Gaza still have left. During the 50 days of hostilities lasting from 8 July until 26 August 2014, 2,251 Palestinians were killed; 1,462 of them are believed to be civilians, including 551 children and 299 women. 66 Israeli soldiers and five civilians, including one child, were also killed. Overall, 11,231 Palestinians were injured during the conflict, including 3,540 women and 3,436 children. Roughly one third of these children will have to cope with disabilities lasting throughout life as a result of their injuries.” (<https://www.unrwa.org/2014-gaza-conflict>)

As colleagues – now friends – we were in constant touch through the war and in the aftermath, we regrouped, applied for a variation to the outcomes for the project, and focused the work on two areas – training graduates to teach Palestinian Arabic online and working with those disabled, especially through war-inflicted hearing impairment, to enable access to higher education.



The work – developed by Giovanna Fassetta, Nazmi Al Masri, Grazia Imperiale and myself has led to a spin out unit and many people who have learned Arabic through a Freirean pedagogy of freedom, building relationships with graduates and learning about the life lived despite and beyond the siege. Modules have explore cookery, architecture, pars cours, art and embroidery and have enabled people to earn a wage. The deaf-sign language courses are defiant in grace and beauty and joyful learning, and as capacities and experiences of such international project work developed under Dr Al Masri's leadership and vision, expanding the work to develop further projects under the Global Challenge Research Fund to include a wide range of work with cultural projects and organisation.

In April last year the Gaza team, under the leadership of Rafeet Alareer, ran another project from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, entitled Cultures of Sustainable and Inclusive Peace and developing women in leadership roles in strong cultural institutions for peace (SDG16). Watch the film [here](#) – it went far and wide.



I am constantly in awe of my friends and colleagues and the network of hopeful goodness which they have developed over many years. We are proud of what we achieve together, - not least the publication of a book with a major academic linguistics press in the UK - *Multilingual Online Academic Collaborations as Resistance: Crossing Impassable Borders* ed Giovanna Fassetta, Nazmi Al-Masri, Alison Phipps 2018, Multilingual Matters.

And every time a miracle happens and we can, despite all, meet, there is an abundance of joy and a host of new ways of living a life beyond siege, beyond despair and despite the reality. It is not Pollyanna-ish work. It is hard, hard, hard – a daily struggle and commitment to work many times harder to overcome the violence than to ignore or perpetuate it through inaction.

Applied linguistics may not seem an obviously place for such work of relationship, hope and pragmatic, concrete impact. But here we stand, we can do no other. We testify to the good work that is possible, with what we can do.



Alison Phipps is UNESCO Chair for Refugee Integration Through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow.

THE HEALTH OF PALESTINIAN PRISONERS

What is a retired (emeritus) professor in Australia (albeit brought up a Glasgow boy) doing, trying to drum up support for people in Scotland to support a look at the health of Palestinian prisoners?

Explanation: Well, 40 years ago, at a conference in Gaza, I was approached by a Palestinian professor, Rita Giacaman, who told me, out of the blue, that I would be helping the University of Birzeit, on the West Bank to set up a Diploma in Primary Health Care and a Masters in Public Health. Some months later the British government sent me to Palestine to do just that and I have been teaching into these programmes since then. I Have witnessed the situation of the suffering of Palestinians, including the encroachment of the settlements into the West Bank. Roughly half a million settlers, with their own exclusive roads and schools and infrastructures flourish and give the lie to the so-called solution of “two states”.

As emeritus professor, I have been actively involved in the health of men, including consulting for the 2010 Australian National Male Health Policy, setting up the Men’s Health and Information Centre and enjoying the role of patron of the Australian Men’s Health

Association. The emphasis of the work has been on the social determinants of health and included a study on Aboriginal men's experience in prison.

And so, I come to the health of Palestinian men who have been in prison. It is a rather neglected area of study. Some good and necessary work has been done on the health of women and children. Less work has been done on men although it is an issue of great public health importance, including the fact that many men and boys have been imprisoned.

B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organisation, says *"As at the end of September 2020, there were 4,184 Palestinian security detainees and prisoners being held Israeli Prison Service"* (B'Tselem, 24th November 2020). Another account says *"there are currently 4,650 Palestinians (security detainees) held in Israeli jails, of those 520 are being held without charge or trial, 200 are children, 40 are women, 455 are serving life sentences, 499 are serving a sentence of more than 20 years"* (Mohammed Haddad, Aljazeera, 13th September 2021).

A high percentage of Palestinian males have been in some form of Israeli detention. Some are jailed for several months, most for years. Some are held under "administrative detention" without trial. The impact of detention is enormous, both on the prisoners themselves, while incarcerated, and in what life they have when released, and has a huge impact on their families.

I was part of a team sent by the World Health Organisation in 2016; its report mentions the problems with the health of these prisoners: *"lack of access to timely and adequate medical care, both diagnosis and treatment; inadequate nutrition and housing conditions; and denial of family visits and communications. Physical and psychological abuse especially in interrogation, the use of arbitrary punishments and administrative detention without trial."*(WHO 2016).

Whether the prisoners are labelled as terrorists or resistance fighters depends on one's perspective or sources of information.

An initial small research project will highlight health problems of the men in prison. The proportion of women held in detention is much smaller and requires a study of its own. The study will initially focus (Phase One) on the perceptions of the mothers of the prisoners of the health of their imprisoned children; they are the most significant witnesses to the situation of their imprisoned sons and daughters and their own health also suffers as a consequence.

Possible questions (These are merely suggestions: the team at the Institute of Community and Public Health at Birzeit University will adapt/devise its own culturally appropriate questions):

- What is your impression of the effect of imprisonment on your child's health and wellbeing?
- How often was he allowed visitors? Was it relatively easy to see him (distance of travel, frequency of visits, etc.)?
- What medical facilities were available in the prison?
- What changes have you seen in your child's health as a result of their imprisonment?
- Either in or out of prison: Has he been helped by contact with friends?
- Did his religion help him in prison? Did prison make him more or less religious?
(If the opportunity arises in a culturally appropriate way for such a sensitive topic: have you perceived any changes in his sexual health and wellbeing?)

I have undertaken to raise the money for this work. I am asking people either to contribute themselves, however small an amount, or on behalf of their organisation. Alternatively, or in addition, this request could be forwarded to individuals or organisations which might respond positively. Contributions should go to:

- (Bank): People's Choice Credit Union, Adelaide South Australia
- Name of the account: APPEH ONLINE 2
- BSB: 805050
- Account number: 102716825

This account is kindly provided by The Australian Palestinian Partnerships in Education and Health. When a donation is made, I shall be informed by email: j.macdonald@westernsydney.edu.au

No one outside of Palestine, including myself, will benefit in any way from the money raised. Should the raised money exceed \$30,000, the excess will go to Phase Two of the research (see above). I will make monthly reports of the state of the project, including the funding.



**John Macdonald,
Emeritus Professor of Public Health
Western Sydney University**

THE JOURNEY: SURGICAL SKILLS TEACHING IN PALESTINE

It was 5pm on a warm April evening in 2015 in the meeting room at Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem after the successful completion of a Basic Surgical Skills Course (BSSC) for 22 trainees from the West Bank and Gaza. The whole course had been delivered by a Palestinian faculty, thus achieving one of the aims of the group of UK surgeons and technician assembled by Robin and Magda Kincaid in 2011 to improve surgical training for Palestinian surgical trainees.



Figure 1: UK team with the first Palestinian BSSC Faculty April 2015 at AVH, Jerusalem

The courses began because of Robin and Magda Kincaid, surgeons from Truro, Cornwall, observing, whilst on holiday in the Holy Land, some of the challenges faced by patients and

health care staff in the West Bank. As surgeons they wanted to support surgical training in some way. They discussed their ideas with Dr Umaiye Khammash, then Chief of the Field Health Programme for UNRWA in the West Bank and Dr Salwa Najjab, director of Juzoor who were very supportive and helped in so many ways to facilitate the courses. The Kincaids approached the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh to credit a Basic Surgical Skills Course for Palestine, which they very generously did, as well as providing much administrative support from the Education Section. Dina Nasser, an infection control nurse based at AVH, took on the role of facilitator for the courses. This involved procuring animal tissue for teaching and practising the skills, along with surgical instruments and sutures, kindly donated by a local company. From the feedback from faculty and the Palestinian candidates on the course, it was a success! It was held in AVH with a faculty comprised of the Kincaids and Ian Brown, breast surgeon from Truro and the Scottish team of David Sedgwick, general surgeon in Fort William, Ian Wallace, retired general surgeon from St John's, Livingston, Ruth McKee, colorectal surgeon at Glasgow Royal Infirmary and Sarah Sholl, Skills Centre Manager at RCSEd.



Figure 2: Faculty of the first BSSC in Palestine May 2011. Magda and Robin Kincaid are at the left of the photograph with their 3 children in front Calum, Una and James. Drs Umaiye Khammash and Salwa Najjab

The team was invited back the following year, with the addition of John Anderson, colorectal surgeon at GRI and the process of training a faculty of Palestinian surgeons began with a specific Train the Trainer course focussing on teaching skills to deliver a BSSC.



Figure 3 : John Anderson giving feedback to Palestinian Instructor Dr Ashraf Obaid

This model set the pattern for the next 3 years with mentoring of the Palestinian instructors and technical supporters. The annual course was delivered in Juzoor Headquarters in Ramallah for a couple of years and then in An Najah University Hospital, Nablus. Feedback from the trainees and faculty remained very good. Dr Omar Abdul Shafi joined the faculty of a BSSC at RCSEd lead by David Sedgwick to gain experience as Convener of the Palestinian courses in December 2014.



Figure 3: Dr Omar Abdul Shafi joins the faculty of a BSSC at RCSEd. in December 2014

The relationship between the UK team and the Surgical Division of the Palestinian Medical Council grew stronger, particularly in development of the surgical curriculum with the expert guidance of Ruth McKee, who had been one of surgeons on the project team implementing the Intercollegiate Surgical Curriculum in the British Isles. A framework for surgical training resulted, incorporating methods for teaching, a syllabus and assessment methods which ensured that trainees attained satisfactory outcomes, with appropriate feedback to the trainees through Annual reviews of Competence Progression (ARCP). There was very helpful input for the Palestinians on setting up OSCE's and improving their Exams after an evening of advice and discussion with John McGregor, consultant surgeon at Crosshouse Hospital, Kilmarnock and chair of the Joint Committee on Intercollegiate Examinations. BSSC became an essential part of the surgical curriculum.

One of the overall aims of the UK team was to encourage the course delivery in Gaza; between 2011 and 2018 the attendance of trainers and trainees from Gaza was sporadic because of the availability of permits for them to travel to the West Bank. The opportunity arose in March 2019 when Ruth McKee and David Sedgwick were able to mentor a faculty of surgeons from Gaza to deliver a course to 20 candidates. It was a very well-run course and it was gratifying to see one of the instructors had been a candidate on the 2012 course at AVH.



Figure 4 : A warm reception from Dr Suhaila Tarazi and Al Ahli hospital team in Gaza, March 2019



Figure 5: BSSC Course in Al Ahli Hospital Gaza in March 2019

Further milestones in this programme have been the first BSSC delivered without UK mentors in December 2018 in Nablus



Figure 6: First 'solo' BSSC run by Palestinian Faculty in Nablus in December 2018

and a course delivered on 2 sites, linking the Al Ahli Hospitals in Hebron and Gaza on Zoom, with co-ordination by John Anderson in Scotland. A further spin-off from this co-operation has been the introductory aspects of non-technical skills for surgeons (NOTSS) and aspects of the 'Scottish Surgical Boot Camps' under the skilled leadership of Ken Walker, colo-rectal surgeon from Inverness.



Figure 7. Shaban Mortaja, course facilitator, and part of the BSSC team in Gaza May 2022

It has been a real privilege for all the UK faculty to work with Palestinian colleagues and to help in a small way to improve surgical training. We are very grateful to RCSEd, UNRWA, JUZOOR, British Council, MAP and US Aid, Nobel Medical Supplies for their continuing support.

David Sedgwick, Magda Ionescu, John Anderson, Robin Kincaid, Ruth McKee, Sarah Sholl, Ken Walker, Ian Wallace

Links to other articles about the project:

1. 2012 - "Scalpel Solidarity: Surgery in Palestine"
[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(11\)60904-5/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(11)60904-5/fulltext)
2. 2012 - (<http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2012/06/11/magdalena-kincaid-surgical-teaching-on-the-mount-of-olives-part-2/>)
3. 2013 - <http://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2013/05/31/magdalena-kincaid-basic-surgical-skills-on-the-mount-of-olives-part-2/>
4. 2014 – 'Team Effort' article in RCSEd Surgeons News
https://issuu.com/thinkpublishing/docs/sn_sep14_issu/67
5. 2017 – Letter to the Lancet 'Palestinian surgical training: local faculty, local delivery'
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)31508-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)31508-8/fulltext)

A CLINICAL OBSERVERSHIP IN SCOTLAND

The following article is reproduced from the *Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Reporter*.



PALESTINE DOCTOR PRAISES NHSGGC STAFF FOLLOWING CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

A newly qualified doctor from Palestine has praised NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde staff for their welcome, following clinical placements at the Vale of Leven and Queen Elizabeth University Hospitals.

Dr Saffana Ajweh, 24, from Hebron, spent time with teams in the oncology department at the Vale to learn more about the treatments offered to lung and breast cancer patients.

Oncology clinical nurse specialist at the Vale, Gerry O'Hare helped to arrange Saffana's placement. Gerry has worked for 10 years supporting cancer nurse education at Bethlehem University. More recently he has been supporting the Medical Aid for Palestinians programmes in Gaza, working with colleagues to improve breast cancer services in this area.

Saffana said: “I found working with the team very comfortable and they are very professional in what they do. They care about not only disease but also how they feel they make a perfect relationship between them and their patients. It was the most special and unforgettable experience I have ever had.

“This is the first time I’ve visited Scotland, it is a peaceful and beautiful place. It has many beautiful sights and historical buildings to visit and the people here so friendly and nice.”

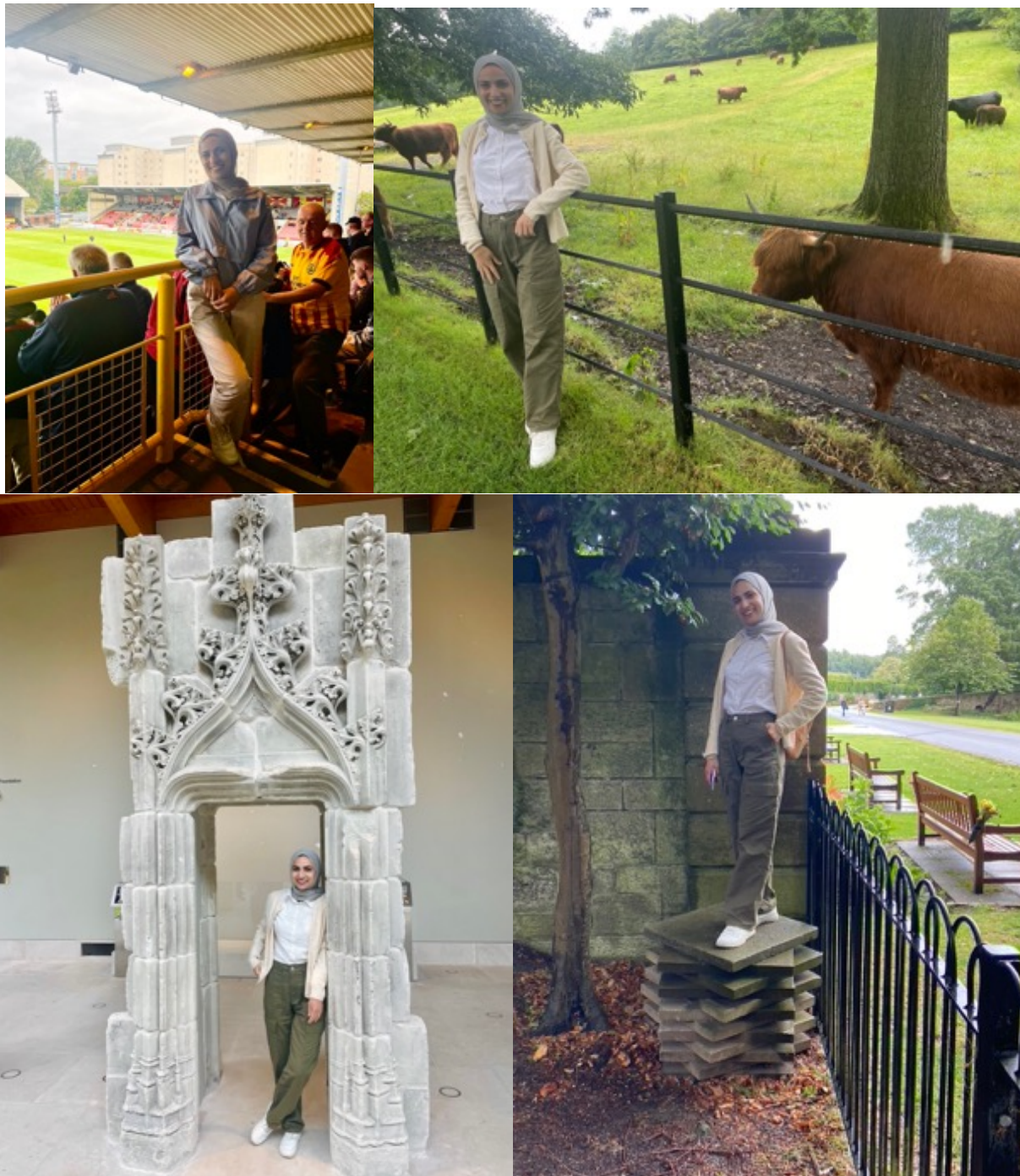
As well as spending time at the Vale of Leven, Saffana also worked alongside Neurosurgery teams at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in Glasgow, and observed cancer clinics at the Beatson.

She added: “The main highlight has been the opportunity to observe and see how the medical field deal with oncology patients. I have enjoyed spending time with great people like them and learn more about cancer treatment and palliative care from the best.”

Gerry, who has played a key role in arranging similar educational visits, particularly for nurses from Palestine in the past, said: “I have been supported in the past by NHSGGC management and colleagues hosting post graduate cancer nurses from Bethlehem University at NHSGGC sites. The Palestinian nurses have been welcomed and the experience of observing practice here has been significant in developing their cancer nursing skills. On this occasion I was asked by Dr Graham Watt, who is a representative with Medical Aid for Palestinians, if I could facilitate a placement for Saffana at our hospitals.

“It’s her first time in the UK, and she has been overwhelmed by the welcome she has received from colleagues, the quality of care she has witnessed being delivered.

“In challenging times for us all in the NHS I am proud that my colleagues are still motivated to extend kindness and opportunities to our Palestinian colleagues who work in the most challenging circumstances.”



Saffana's visit to Scotland was not restricted to clinical settings. She also visited Firhill Football Ground to watch the unusual spectacle of Partick Thistle scoring four goals, sped round the newly re-opened Burrell Collection, sought out the herd of Highland cattle in Pollok Country Park (a highlight of her trip) and was also photographed on top of a pile of paving stones.

NEUROSURGICAL MISSION TO GAZA

The beginning

This was my second occasion to travel to Gaza but the first time on a Neurosurgical Mission for MAP. I accompanied two fellow Consultant Neurosurgeons - Johnathan and Georgios - and a Consultant Neurologist- Naheed.

Neurosurgical Services are provided at two hospitals in Gaza, serving approximately a population of some two million:

- Shifa Hospital is located in Gaza city and serves a population of some 1.4 million Gazans.
- The European Gaza Hospital is located towards the south of Gaza Strip and serves a population of some 0.6 million Gazans.



Our Mission

In brief this was to review and treat as many patients as possible. The local Service is constrained by limited resources, access to basic equipment, personnel and the necessary complementary services such as radiotherapy. On Sunday 27 November we went directly to Shifa Hospital for a joint neurosurgical clinic. A prearranged schedule of some sixty patients had been selected by the local neurological team. As word of our arrival spread the number had significantly increased. We encountered a diverse range of neurosurgical pathology

and given the breadth of experience the MAP team had put together we were able to accommodate all reviews.

Our Task

We listed and prioritised all patients we had reviewed. Cases were selected on clinical priority and the training needs of the local team. For the following three days Shifa hospital provided two operating theatres functioning from 8am to 6pm. As can only be expected in the neurological setting with meagre resources the theatre schedule changed sometimes on an hourly basis to accommodate new emergencies.

On day two a child in a coma from a brain abscess was brought in. The child was in a critical, life-threatening condition. The dedicated team at Shifa stayed to operate and we didn't finish that day until midnight. In three days we three UK surgeons performed twenty five surgical interventions including three paediatric brain tumours.





Symposium

On the final evening MAP hosted a scientific symposium for an ever increasing medical and nursing audience! This facilitated updates on current neurological practice. It was both a teaching and learning exchange for us all.



Farewell but not Goodbye

We departed for home the next morning tired certainly but privileged to have worked alongside dedicated professionals working in the most harrowing and resource starved circumstances. I am in awe of their commitment and dedication and grateful also to MAP for giving me the opportunity to share good practice and experience and, not least, to reflect on my own good fortune. As is the want of many an Irish man I often reflect on the thought provoking words of Seamus Heaney, Irish poet and Nobel Prize winner. His words floated through my mind as I journeyed homewards.

.....Human beings suffer
They torture one another
They get hurt and get hard.

.....

History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave....
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme .

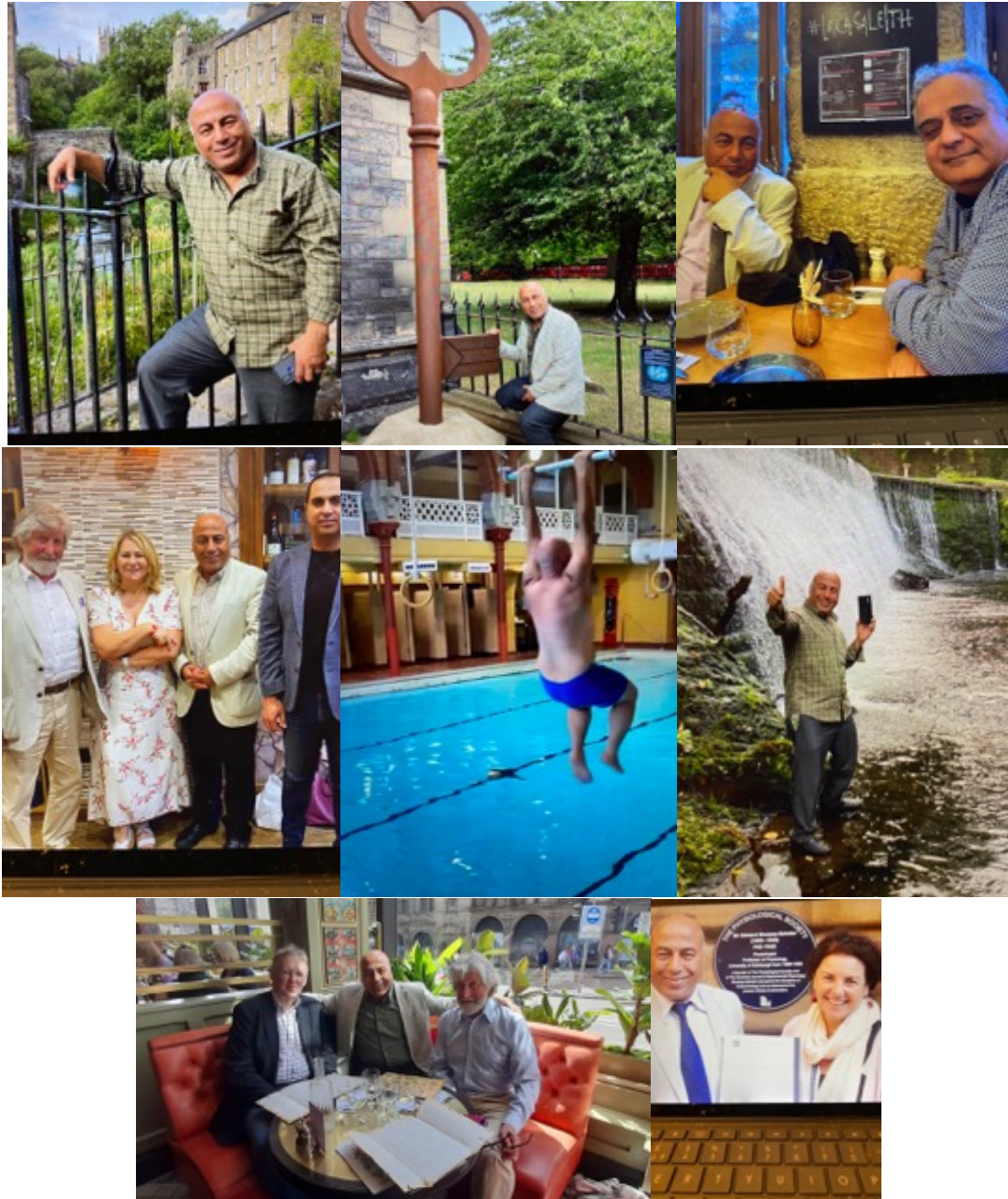
From THE CURE OF TROY by Seamus Heaney



Roddy O'Kane
Consultant Neurosurgeon

DR KHAMIS ELESSI VISITS SCOTLAND

SPHF Newsletter No 5 featured Dr Khamis Elessi, pioneer of evidence-based medicine and palliative care in Gaza. Here are photos of his recent visit to Scotland, visiting new places (Water of Leith, Dean Village, Drumsheugh Baths, the Awda Key at St Mary's Cathedral) and old colleagues (Colin Cooper, Pauline McNeil, Majdy Ashour, Liz Grant and Graham Watt)



In the words of Colin Cooper, “Wherever Khamis went on his Scottish visit there was energy, hilarity and camaraderie”.

BREAST CANCER MISSION TO THE WEST BANK WITH MAP

Many of the readers of this newsletter will be familiar with the project being funded at Rafidia Hospital in Nablus by Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP). A volunteer multi-disciplinary team consisting of breast surgeons, breast care nurses, oncologists and radiologists have been supporting this project since 2018 and Jane McCaskill, consultant breast surgeon from Dundee reported on her involvement in the previous newsletter.



I have been delighted to be involved with MAP in the development of breast cancer services at Rafidia since 2018, in my capacity as a consultant breast radiologist from Glasgow. It has been gratifying to see the progress made over the past four years and, in particular from my point of view, the advancement of breast imaging for women in the West Bank as a direct result of MAP's involvement and the engagement of the local health care professionals.

When we first visited we were aiming to help to develop a more formalised breast service. The breast team were working from the general surgical unit with patients having to move across the hospital for imaging by ultrasound. Mammography (x-rays of the breast) had to be performed at a different hospital site altogether, often privately.



A mission trip planned in March 2020 was cancelled at short notice, rather ironically because of a doctors' strike in the West Bank but rather fortuitously as international travel became significantly compromised a short time after. It was only in October of this year that I was able to return to see the progress made. As Jane alluded to in the previous newsletter, the basement of the A&E department in Rafidia Hospital had been converted into a purpose built Breast Assessment Unit during the Covid epidemic. MAP had organised fund raising for a dedicated mammography unit in 2020 and this had been delivered along with breast biopsy equipment and an ultrasound machine. The result was a dedicated breast unit in which women could be seen and have their investigations completed on one site without having to travel across the hospital or indeed the city for the necessary imaging.

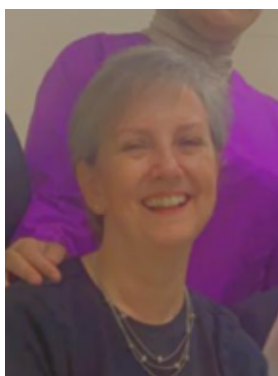


However, one of the difficulties encountered by staff is access to appropriate training. As a breast radiologist I was able to assist in training both the local consultant radiologist and mammographers in the use of their new equipment. In addition, Jane McNaughton one of our Clinical Specialist Radiographers from the West of Scotland Breast Screening Centre also

accompanied me to the West Bank. She has specialist skills in stereotactic biopsy (biopsying lesions within the breast under x-ray control) and was able to assist the mammographers in setting up their new mammogram unit to do this. A particular success was showing the staff how to practice performing biopsies by using an aubergine with eggshell within it. This looks very much like a breast when we take an x-ray and allows staff to practice before they get a real patient into the machine! We did, however, manage to perform biopsies on two patients who had been waiting particularly for this expertise and the local team are now in a good position to be able to continue this service with reference to ourselves should this be necessary.

In the New Year we hope to host a consultant radiologist and a mammographer from Nablus in the West of Scotland, in association with MAP, for an observership in breast imaging. Their enthusiasm and commitment under adverse conditions is remarkable and they deserve all the support we can give them.

Janet Litherland
Consultant Breast Radiologist



THE LANCET PALESTINIAN HEALTH ALLIANCE CONFERENCE

The 12th scientific conference took place virtually via zoom on three days in November 2022. The daily programmes of oral presentations are show on the next three pages with weblinks to a video recording of the relevant day

Day 1: <https://youtu.be/m4bLYzl4OLQ?t=1>

Lancet Palestinian Health Alliance (LPHA) 12th Conference
Health of Palestinians inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory
Birzeit University, oPt

Organized on behalf of the LPHA by

The Institute of Community and Public Health (ICPH) at Birzeit University (BZU), in collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at the American University of Beirut (AUB)

Agenda

Day 1 – Monday 21 November 2022		
13:00 – 13:25	Session I: Opening Remarks Moderator: Abdullatif Hussein, Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, West Bank, oPt	
13:00 – 13:05	Welcoming note	Beshara Doumani President, BZU, West Bank, oPt
13:05 – 13:10	The Palestinian Ministry of Health: Selected key issues	Mai Alkaila Palestinian Minister of Health, oPt
13:10 – 13:25	The LPHA: reflections from Steering Group members	Graham Watt University of Glasgow, UK
13:25 – 14:10	Session II: Political violence and health Moderator: Mamdouh Aker, Birzeit University Board of Trustees, West Bank, oPt	
13:25 – 13:40	Palestinian women's agency and critical consciousness amidst settler-colonial oppression: a feminist dialogue with local and international activists	Federica Cavazzoni University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
13:40 – 13:55	Framing refugee trauma in the Arab Region: an enhanced scoping review	Nadine Hosny University of California, Davis, School of Medicine, USA
13:55 – 14:15	Discussion	
14:15 – 14:30	Break	
14:30 – 15:45	Session III: Children Moderator: Maysaa Nemer, Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, West Bank, oPt	
14:30 – 14:45	An integrated community-based home visitors program improves early childhood development in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory: a randomized control trial	Hana Al Rabadi World Vision International and Al-Quds University, West Bank, oPt
14:45 – 15:00	Behavioral and social determinants of early childhood caries among Palestinian preschoolers in Jerusalem area: a cross-sectional study	Saif Amer Horizon Academy, Al-Nayzak and Ramallah Friends School, West Bank, oPt
15:00 – 15:15	Factor structure and psychometric properties of the War Child Agency Assessment Scale, Palestinian version (WCAAS-Pal) in a large sample of Palestinian children	Guido Veronese University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy
15:15 – 15:45	Discussion	
15:45 – 16:10	Session IV: Advocacy Moderator: Jennifer Leaning, Harvard University, USA	
15:45 – 16:00	Advocacy: the what, whys and hows?	Rohan Talbot MAP, UK
16:00 – 16:10	Discussion	

Day 2: <https://youtu.be/iIKCbdopSdc>

Day 2 – Tuesday 22 November 2022		
13:00 – 14:40	Session V: the COVID-19 pandemic Moderator: Khamis Elessi, Islamic University of Gaza, Gaza Strip, oPt	
13:00 – 13:15	Converging barriers to accessing health services for non-communicable diseases during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Gaza Strip	Benjamin Bouquet World Health Organization, oPt
13:15 – 13:30	Falling through the gaps: barriers to accessing essential non-communicable services during Covid-19 in Area C	Bassam Abu Hamad Al-Quds University, oPt
13:30 – 13:45	Covid-19 amid Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank: responses and impacts	Lama Shakhshir Institute of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, West Bank, oPt
13:45 – 14:00	The importance of community engagement in COVID-19 response: UNRWA's Jordan field experience	Khalil Abu-Naqera UNRWA, Jordan
14:00 – 14:40	Discussion	
14:40 – 14:55	Break	
14:55 – 15:45	Session VI: Cancer Moderator: Motassem Hamdan, Al-Quds University, West Bank, oPt	
14:55 – 15:10	Exploring the factors and needs associated with the development of a palliative care programme into the Palestinian healthcare system: a multi-method approach	Hammouda Abu-Odah World Health Organization and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong
15:10 – 15:25	Women's awareness of breast cancer symptoms: a national cross-sectional study from Palestine	Roba Ghithan on behalf of Mohamed Raed Elshami Cleveland Medical Center, Ohio, USA
15:25 – 15:45	Discussion	
15:45 – 16:35	Session VII: The Palestinians Moderator Huda Zurayk, American University of Beirut, Lebanon	
15:45 – 16:00	The sum of all our struggles: Palestinian refugees after the third exile	Ghassan Abu Sittih Global Health Institute, American University of Beirut, Lebanon
16:00 – 16:15	Palestinians inside the Green Line	Osama Tannous FXB Center, Harvard University, USA
16:15 – 16:35	Discussion	

Day 3: <https://youtu.be/DcPIIxNxRjo?t=1>

Day 3 – Wednesday 23 November 2022		
13:00 – 13:50	Session VIII: Palestinian Refugees Moderator: Iman Nuwayhid, American University of Beirut, Lebanon	
13:00 – 13:15	Association between adverse childhood experiences and mental and health conditions among pregnant Palestine refugee women in Jordan	Masako Horino UNRWA Headquarters, Jordan
13:15 – 13:30	Using the Robson Classification for rising caesarean section rates among Palestinian refugees: results from 290,047 electronic medical records across five settings	Zeina Jamaluddine and Gloria Paolucci London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK
13:30 – 13:50	Discussion	
13:50 – 14:40	Session IX: Medications and Drug Interactions Moderator: Rana Khatib, Birzeit University, West Bank, oPt	
13:50 – 14:05	A comprehensive evaluation of potentially significant drug-drug, drug-herb, and drug-food interactions among cancer patients receiving anticancer drugs: a cross-sectional study from Palestine	Amer Koni An-Najah National University Hospital, West Bank, oPt
14:05 – 14:20	The Impact of Antibiotic Stewardship Program on antibiotic consumption, the costs of antibiotics, and the antimicrobial susceptibility pattern: an experience from a developing country	Banan M. Aiesh An-Najah National University Hospital, West Bank, oPt
14:20 – 14:40	Discussion	
14:40 – 14:55	Break	
14:55 – 15:45	Session X: Mental Health and Wellbeing Moderator: Hanan Abdul-Rahim, Qatar University, Qatar	
14:55 – 15:10	Values and practices of 'social inclusion' in mental health. Learning from lived experience in Palestine	Hanna Kienzler King's College London, UK
15:10 – 15:25	Indigenising mental health in Palestine using women's resistance as a case study	Jeanine Hourani University of Exeter, UK
15:25 – 15:45	Discussion	
15:45 – 16:10	Session XI: Closing Session Moderator: Graham Watt, University of Glasgow, UK	
15:45 – 15:55	Reflections on the posters presented to the LPHA conference 2022	Rima Afifi College of Public Health, Iowa University, USA
15:55 – 16:10	Closing remarks	Richard Horton The Lancet, UK

NEWS FROM MAP



Project Spotlight: Improving Psychiatric care in the West Bank

In 2019, MAP established a new project to improve the quality and productivity of the psychiatry residency programme at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital and to support the integration of mental health into primary health care (PHC) services. The project targets around 100 staff at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital (including 5 psychiatric residents and 4 psychiatrists) and 9 psychiatrists working at Community Mental Health Centres (CMHCs) across the West Bank.

The project is supported by a group of psychiatrists linked with Georgetown University and George Washington University, as well as multidisciplinary mental health professionals linked with the Civic Twinning between Glasgow and Bethlehem, and the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych). We work in close partnership with Dr Samah Jaber, the national mental health lead.

The project has gone from strength to strength this year with the resumption of training missions to the West Bank. MAP supported the revision of the national electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) protocol in collaboration with doctors at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital. The final protocol was disseminated at a workshop in Ramallah in August, attended by all psychiatrists who refer or practice ECT in either private or governmental hospitals/centres. This is supported by continuing clinical teaching in ECT and ongoing ECT supervision sessions for residents at Bethlehem Psychiatric Hospital.

In a bid to promote greater uptake of psychiatry, the Palestine Medical Council has agreed to separate the entrance exam for the psychiatry programme from the internal medicine and surgical exams. This was announced earlier in the year. Work next year will see a greater focus on improving the board examinations and curriculum for the psychiatry residency programme.

Capacity-building of psychiatry residents continues through fortnightly supervision sessions, one-to-one mentoring, as well as access to CPD opportunities through the RCPsych's online education platform. Work also began this year on developing a Mental Health Strategy for Children and Adolescents in Palestine.

MAP wishes to thank all those of you involved in supporting this project.

Other MAP news

In 2022, MAP was able to carry out an incredible 42 training missions across Palestine and Lebanon, the highest annual number of missions to date. Training covered a range of projects, from neonatal care training in Palestinian Red Crescent Society hospitals in Lebanese refugee camps, to training breast radiographers in the new MAP-supported breast unit in Rafedia hospital in Nablus. This would not have been possible without the expertise and dedication of our volunteers who join in-person missions, as well as inputting into regular remote multidisciplinary team meetings and online trainings.

We are looking forward to members of the Rafedia breast team being hosted in Glasgow on observerships next year and will keep you updated on this.

January 2023 will mark the start of MAP's new five-year strategy. Disability, Mental Health & Psychosocial support, Women & Child Health, and Emergencies & Complex Hospital Care will continue to be our four key programme priorities. These will continue to be closely linked with advocacy initiatives, utilising programmatic data to highlight the issues around Palestinians' access to healthcare and maximising the voice of Palestinians. This strategy will see a greater focus on addressing the health needs of older persons within the communities we work with.

We are delighted to be welcoming our new CEO, Melanie Ward who joins MAP from the International Rescue Committee. She brings extensive experience in humanitarian and development programming and advocacy and has worked in both Palestine and Lebanon. We also welcome our new Director of Programmes, Sameer Sah, whom we look forward to introducing to many of you. We are sad to be saying goodbye to Dr Andy Ferguson who has supported MAP's programming for 7 years, but glad that Andy will maintain his involvement in key projects through his other networks.

Finally, we have a number of fantastic challenge events coming up in 2023, including Trek Palestine from 22nd – 30th April and Cycle Palestine in September. If you are interested in signing up or learning about our other events, you can read more here:
<https://www.map.org.uk/challenge-events/challenge-events>

Melanie Coyne
MAP Senior Programme Manager

SCOTTISH PALESTINIAN HEALTH FACULTY

The SPHF is not a formal organisation, but an informal network of colleagues willing to share their experiences, information and news, including :-

- Palestinian health professionals and health researchers who have trained or studied in Scotland
- Palestinian health professionals and health researchers currently working and living in Scotland
- Scottish health professionals and health researchers, at home or abroad, with links and activities in Palestine

The terms “Scottish” and “Palestinian” are considered broadly in terms of having family or residential connections with either Scotland or Palestinian communities in the OPT (the State of Palestine), Lebanon or elsewhere. Our aims are :-

- To promote Scottish Palestinian health collaboration
- To support the development of health and health care in Palestine

which we hope to achieve by :-

- connecting Scottish and Palestinian colleagues working in the health field
- sharing experience, information, evidence, views and plans
- developing new activities involving Scottish Palestinian health collaboration
- supporting Palestinian health professionals and researchers visiting Scotland
- raising the profile and impact of Scottish Palestinian health collaboration

Apart from the above aims, the SPHF does not have a representative function or collective view. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of individual contributors.

SCOTTISH PALESTINIAN HEALTH FACULTY



Contact: graham.watt@glasgow.ac.uk