

# St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group



**St John**

**Patron:**

The Lord Vestey KCVO, DL

**Chairman & Order Hospitaller:**

Nicholas Woolf

## St John Scotland

# Report on the work of SJEHG

### Overview

St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) is the only charitable provider of expert eye care in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. We have been treating patients regardless of their ethnicity, religion or ability to pay for over 130 years. In 2015, we saw and treated over 128,000 patients which included performing 5,000 major operations. We are also the only institution in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) where Palestinian nurses and doctors can specialise in ophthalmology. We have 235 members of staff, including 140 medical staff who are trained to provide the highest quality of care.

It is difficult for those living in the oPt to receive treatment. Financial problems and movement restrictions delay access to treatment, which can have serious consequences for a disorder which requires swift treatment to be effective. In response to the high levels of poverty in the area, SJEHG subsidises treatment for all and completely waives fees for those who cannot afford them.

We remain extremely grateful to St John Scotland for their continued support over the years towards our sight-saving services. I hope this report demonstrates to the Trustees the impact of our work.

### Medical Centres

#### St John Eye Hospital, East Jerusalem

SJEHG's hospital in Jerusalem is where the majority of our specialist staff are based and where we refer our most complex cases. Having recently expanded our surgical capacity in Jerusalem by 44%, our focus is now to complete the hospital's modernisation. A key part of this is transferring our patient records to an electronic system. This three year project will hugely increase our staff productivity and will be integral to any future research we carry out.



In 2015, we treated 42,700 outpatients in Jerusalem, including 14,100 children, and performed nearly 3,800 major operations. From January to November 2016, SJEHG has already seen 38,550 outpatients in Jerusalem, including 13,266 children. We have also performed 3,455 major operations.

#### St John Eye Clinic in Anabta, Northern West Bank

Apart from our charitable care, what sets the Anabta clinic apart is the level of subspecialty care we offer. Specialist doctors from our flagship hospital in Jerusalem travel to Anabta weekly to offer their services. We are the only clinic that can offer this level of specialist care in the region. In 2015, we treated over 22,000 outpatients in Anabta, including 7,100 children. In total, 5,180 patients were referred to our hospital in Jerusalem for treatment. Since January to November 2016, SJEHG has seen 19,605 outpatients in Anabta, including 6,810 children. In total, 1,830 patients have been referred to Jerusalem for treatment. The lower amount of referrals in 2016 is a reflection of the Anabta clinic's increased capacity diagnose and treat patients.

## **St John Eye Hospital in Hebron, Southern West Bank**

In November 2015, we moved into our new Hebron Hospital. This has significantly improved the accessibility of our services for those in the region and increased the number of people we help, whilst ensuring the long term sustainability of our operations in the region. In 2015, we saw over 11,000 outpatients, including 3,400 children. We also performed 330 major operations. Nearly 600 patients were referred to our hospital in Jerusalem for more complex treatment. In 2016 (January-November), SJEHG saw over 12,245 outpatients, including 4,062 children, and performed 485 major operations. Compared to last year, our outpatient capacity is expected to increase by 20% and our surgical capacity by 10% thanks to our new facility.



## **Mobile Outreach Programme, West Bank**

Since reviving our second Mobile Outreach team in the West Bank in 2015, our reach and impact is stronger than ever. Our Mobile Outreach teams, and two medical centres, in the West Bank are needed because our patients often find it hard to visit our hospital in Jerusalem for treatment due to the movement restrictions in the area. In 2015, our two Mobile Outreach teams have seen 16,760 patients, including nearly 6,100 children. 1,940 patients were referred for treatment at our main hospital in Jerusalem or to a St John facility in the West Bank. From January to November 2016, our two Mobile Outreach teams saw 16,505 patients, including nearly 5,690 children. Over 2,030 patients have been referred for treatment at a St John facility.

## **St John Gaza Hospital, Gaza Strip**

In response to the high level of need in Gaza, in June 2016 we were able to open our new state-of-the-art facility thanks to voluntary income. The new hospital is a huge improvement on the previous facility. Being purpose built, it has better designed and better laid out diagnostic and surgical rooms. Our previous facility was so cramped that patients had to be prepared for surgery in the main waiting room and waiting lists grew longer every year.



In 2015, we treated 30,500 outpatients, including nearly 9,500 children. We have also performed 920 major operations, 200 of which were on children. In total 520 referrals of more complex cases were made to our hospital in Jerusalem. From January to November 2016, SJEHG has seen 24,680 outpatients in Gaza, including performing 500 major operations. 545 referrals of more complex cases were made to our Jerusalem hospital.

## **The Muristan, Old City of Jerusalem**

In late 2015, SJEHG began its ambitious project to revitalise our clinic in the Old City of Jerusalem, known as the Muristan. The area was the original location of the hospital set up by the Knights of St John in the time of the Crusaders. The clinic will provide primary and emergency eye care for the people of the Old City.

Building work finished on our new clinic and we saw our first patient in October. Work has also begun to transform the yard into a tranquil garden and café, with a recent addition of a swift sculpture symbolising the history of Jerusalem and the hope of the people.

## **Diabetic Retinopathy (DR) Screening Programme, West Bank and Jordan**

In 2016, SJEHG concluded the largest DR screening, treatment and management programme of its kind in

the oPt. This was a direct result of the 2008 Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness study conducted by SJEHG to study eye disease within the oPt, which identified DR as the third-largest cause of blindness and the second-largest cause of severe visual impairment in the oPt. Since 2013, SJEHG has screened over 44,500 patients and diagnosed over 13,600 patients with DR to be treated at our East Jerusalem hospital. Thousands of families have benefitted from this program and will continue to do so for decades to come.

2016 was also the beginning of our first project in a neighbouring country: a pilot DR screening project in Jordan examining Syrian refugees, many of whom are Palestinian. Fida, a nurse who led on the original screening project, is visiting the region for 6 months, screening refugees and training five UNRWA nurses in how to perform the DR screening.

## Medical Research

SJEHG is founding the first research unit in the oPt with an emphasis on research into genetic eye diseases. The project will ultimately benefit SJEHG's patients, with better researched and more targeted treatment, but it is also dedicated to sharing knowledge and resources between Palestinian and Israeli hospitals. This programme will have a long-lasting impact for SJEHG and for the wider Middle East area. Publications from this research team are expected to begin in 2017, enhancing the international reputation of SJEHG as an active research unit.

## Training

**Doctors** – Our Medical Residency Programme continued with success this year. In September 2016, two of our residents entered their second year of their course. We also have two residents who will finish their final, fourth year in January 2017 and, after successfully completing the Palestinian Board exam in ophthalmology, will be certified and licensed to practise as ophthalmologists. These residents can then undertake a fellowship and specialise in a particular area of ophthalmology. After gaining experience as a fellow, doctors can then go on to become consultants in their chosen fields.



*Dr Haneen Shaladeh, 1st Year Medical Resident*

Due to our two fourth year residents completing their course in January, we are expecting to accept two new residents in early 2017. As part of their training, the residents develop their clinical and surgical skills through an integrated programme of teaching, regular assessments and examinations every six months. Our Medical Residency Programme has a significant impact across the region and ensures the lasting sustainability of our sight-saving work. Many doctors who complete the course are given employment at SJEHG and those that do not work in other hospitals across the oPt, providing quality care for their own communities.

**Nurses** – We are the main provider of specialist ophthalmic nursing training in the Middle East and offer the only course in the oPt. Expert training is at the heart of SJEHG; training local doctors and nurses is one of our essential objectives. Once trained, the nurses will go on to treat thousands of patients in their careers with many given future employment with us.

In our Jerusalem Hospital, we run a full-time course for 12 months, finished with a three month consolidation period at one of our medical centres. Nurses are fully supported throughout the course and live on-site, meaning their financial situations are not a barrier to them undertaking this training. Upon completion, graduates are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Ophthalmic Nursing, accredited by the University of West London. Six students have recently graduated from our 2015/2016 ophthalmic nursing course. All of our 2015/2016 intake have been employed by SJEHG and will, now trained, go on to treat thousands of patients in their careers.



Nasrallah Khalylieh, Senior Lecturer Practitioner at our School of Nursing in Jerusalem, also travels to Gaza to provide a specialist ophthalmic nurse training course to 12 Gazan nurses. Launched in 2013 and running every two years, the course is over 6 months and consists of both theoretical knowledge and practical clinical experience under the supervision of our experienced Gaza Hospital staff. After successful completion, the nurses will be awarded the Ophthalmic Nursing Assistant certificate from our School of Nursing.

## Hiba's Story

A lively charming and energetic girl of four years, Hiba was brought to our Hebron Hospital because she had a droopy eyelid.

After noticing that her eyes seemed different, Hiba kept asking her family why one eye was bigger than the other. Her father, himself an ophthalmic doctor, was very worried about his daughter's droopy eyelid and whether her vision would develop normally.

The doctors at our Hebron Hospital diagnosed her with a 'congenital levator dystrophy', or ptosis, which is an oculoplastic condition. Even at such a young age, her family, and grandmother in particular, was keen for her to have an operation to lift the eyelid to prevent any psychological effects on her life in the future.

She was referred to the oculoplastic clinic in our main hospital in Jerusalem and subsequently had a successful operation to lift the eyelid. Her grandmother said that:

*"Without St John, she might not have had successful treatment, and it is difficult to find another centre with such a good reputation."*



Ptosis does not just affect a child's sight. The visible nature of the eye condition can lead to social stigmatisation and children suffering from the condition are often not sent to school; rendering little chance of an independent life. The socio-economic burden of a visible disability is exacerbated for girls because (in a society where marriage is particularly critical for women) it can affect their chances of finding a suitable partner. Many also live in poverty and will be unable to continue their education or find work. Young women with sight issues are therefore caught in a cycle and are often forced to stay at home depending on aging parents.

Fortunately for Hiba, she was able to access our services via our nearby Hebron Hospital, and receive advanced treatment at our Jerusalem Hospital. She is expected to make a full recovery and is back attending school without having the hindrance of her eye condition.

## Impact of our work

SJEHG is improving the lives of individuals, families, communities and the infrastructure of a shattered, war-torn region. By providing charitable eye care to an internationally recognised expert standard and with locally trained Palestinian medical staff, SJEHG returns the gift of sight swiftly and indiscriminately across the oPt.

With their sight saved, children can return to education and adults can return to work. With high levels of poverty and strict movement restrictions in the region, many of our patients would not even seek medical care if SJEHG did not exist, knowing they could not afford any treatment they needed. As whole families often suffer from similar debilitating eye diseases, the impact of our medical care and our ethos to never turn a patient away cannot be understated.

**Thank you once again for your kind support of our work. We would not be able to save the sight of thousands of people every year without your help. If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to let us know.**