Written evidence submitted by Shaare Zedek

Summary

Shaare Zedek Medical Centre is a microcosm of the society that leaders strive to create in the region; a community of people from all religions, ethnicities and backgrounds who live and work together side by side regardless of their circumstances. [1]

Through employment opportunities, institutional collaboration, medical treatment and research, Shaare Zedek delivers a model of coexistence in action, often at great financial expense to the hospital. [2]

Various research initiatives exist specifically to advance the medical treatment of Palestinians and Arab patients. Medical departments including the Paediatric Dialysis Unit treat more Arab patients than from any other ethnic background. [3]

Even during times of political tension and violence, the hospital continues to adhere to its principles of patient care without prejudice. [4]
Shaare Zedek UK raises vital funds to support the work of the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre in Jerusalem. Literally meaning “Gates of Righteousness,” Shaare Zedek has responded to the needs of Jerusalem’s uniquely diverse population from its very first day of operation in 1902; treating patients of every race, religion and nationality regardless of financial circumstances. Medical excellence, patient dignity and a compassionate individualised approach to all are core to our mission. Additionally, the 1,000 bed hospital maintains its reputation as an internationally-regarded research and teaching hospital, committed to advancing scientific progress, innovation and technology. [5]

Shaare Zedek, with its century-long tradition of offering quality medical care to all in Jerusalem, has been a highly positive force in the city’s development and has contributed greatly to residents’ quality of life. Today, it is considered to be in the top echelon of medical institutions in Israel, despite receiving no government funding for equipment, development or research. [6]

Coexistence as a way of life

Visiting dignitaries, including British Parliamentarians, often ask about efforts taken to advance coexistence at the hospital. Coexistence is a way of life at Shaare Zedek. Patient ethnicity is not recorded upon admission but the hospital estimates that the ethnic makeup of its patient population is very similar to that of Jerusalem as a whole; approximately 70% Jewish, 30% Arab. Our patients are referred from all over Israel and surrounding areas including the Palestinian Territories and other countries including the United Arab Emirates. [7]

Our staff also closely mirrors Jerusalem’s ethnic and religious composition. We have several senior staff members from the Arab and Palestinian communities, including our chief cardiothoracic surgeon, a senior anesthetist, a senior urologist, and a senior cardiologist. [8]

Certain departments of the hospital have a patient mix which varies significantly from the average for a variety of reasons. For instance, approximately two-thirds of the patients in our Paediatric Dialysis Unit are Arabs, because of a genetic predisposition in that population to kidney disease. In order to better meet the educational and social needs of these young patients and their families, the Paediatric Dialysis Unit has an Arab social worker and an Arab teacher on staff. [9]

Interestingly, while in the “outside world,” there is minimal contact between ultra-Orthodox Jews and Arabs, in the Paediatric Dialysis Unit, patients and families from both cultures mix freely. Families with children suffering from kidney disease find that they have much more in common than that which divides them. This sense of community was witnessed by Councillor Vikki Slade on a recent visit to the hospital: [9]

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1 “Shaare Zedek is hospital of choice for citizen of United Arab Emirates” Shaare Zedek Medical Centre (SZMC) website 2002
“These children have to come into the hospital on a daily or alternate daily basis, something which has an incredible impact on the family lives of those involved. I was heartened to watch parents sit with children from the opposite side of the political divide while their own parents went to pick up other siblings from school or leave the bedside for other reasons.”  \[10\]

Shaare Zedek’s approach is not to ignore religious and ethnic differences; it is rather to show respect for them. This approach is demonstrated in a number of areas. A perfect example takes place in the Muslim month of Ramadan, when religiously observant Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. Shaare Zedek provides a special meal for its Muslim staff members, scheduled to begin precisely at sunset.  \[11\]

**Arab patients**

The policy of “political blindness” comes at a great cost to the hospital. While Israeli citizens are entitled by law to health coverage through one of the country’s health funds, non-citizens like those who come from the Palestinian Authority have no such coverage and often these cases are completely uninsured.  \[12\]

While severe limitations have been placed on the number of patients coming into Israel from the Palestinian Authority, there are still a significant number of Palestinians being treated in Israeli hospitals, including Shaare Zedek. The cost to the hospital to treat these largely uninsured patients is well in excess of $100,000 per year.  \[13\]

Despite this, it is our pledge as a modern medical centre driven by compassion and not politics to ensure that when a patient arrives at our doors in need of help, he or she will not be deprived.  \[14\]

A story which illustrates this approach is that of a three year old girl rushed to Shaare Zedek from Nablus with severe kidney failure. The close relationship between the head of the hospital in Nablus and the head of Paediatric Nephrology at Shaare Zedek meant one phone call ensured a crash team were waiting for her on arrival. She died on the operating table but the medical team managed to stabilize her and brought her back to life after which she made a remarkable recovery in the care of the Paediatric Dialysis Unit. This life saving collaboration was only possible because of the close relationship between the two doctors. Shaare Zedek was fully aware that there was no authorization from the Palestinian Authority to treat her and even if such authorization had been given it would not have covered most of the cost of the treatment. Shaare Zedek covered the full cost of the girl’s treatment. Such stories are a regular occurrence at Shaare Zedek and are part of the hospital’s contribution to peaceful coexistence.  \[15\]

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**Coexistence at times of political conflict**

\[2\] Appendix 1
Shaare Zedek is not immune to the effects of terrorism. The direct impact on the number of patients and the increased demand for emergency and trauma medicine is immense. During such periods staff—often including those whose family members have been victims of attacks—continue their work on the understanding that those who enter our doors are patients first and foremost and the duty of doctors and nurses is to heal. Following a shooting during the Second Intifada one young patient recounted how a team of Arab and Jewish doctors had brought her back to life: [16]

“A bullet ripped through my chest and into my lung. Two women were killed during that attack and dozens more, beside me, were wounded. I was taken by ambulance to Shaare Zedek Medical Centre and by the time we made it to the hospital, I had no pulse and no blood pressure. I was considered dead on arrival. Through the skilled hands of Dr. Shuli Silberman and Dr. Mahar Deeb, a Jewish and Arab doctor working together, they performed a miracle and brought me back to life. After the surgery, was a long recovery process. My after-care specialist, Dr. Salah Odatallah, stayed by my side through my stay in the ICU and then in the regular ward. But that was not enough. During my stay we formed a strong bond and when I was given permission to return to Chicago, he insisted he fly back with me to ensure my safe return.” [17]

Shaare Zedek also treated a number of Arab victims of terror attacks during the Intifada. One victim, Ibrahim, explained the importance of a social worker’s support for his brother after they were both brought to Shaare Zedek suffering injuries from a bus bombing: [18]

“For him to see just how much the staff cares about him, the way everyone wants to help, has made a big difference to him.” [19]

Research

In the area of research, we have conducted a number of studies in cooperation with Jordanian and Palestinian physicians and hospitals, including a comparative study of the use of pain medication for cancer patients in various institutions, and a genetics study to identify mutations associated with a high risk of breast cancer. Cooperative research with Palestinian institutions has been curtailed to some extent because the risk of terrorism has impeded travel, but staff members on both sides are doing their best to continue working together. [20]

Being based in the heart of Jerusalem, Shaare Zedek is fortunate to have a diverse population of people with a wide ethnic pool which provides a fantastic resource for research. Recent studies looking specifically at Jewish and Arab populations include research into children’s smoking habits [21] and diabetes. [21]
A major focus of research into inherited diseases is identifying the mutations responsible for genetic diseases in children. In Jerusalem, marriage between relatives or within a small ethnic group is still common and, combined with large family size, this results in a higher frequency of genetic diseases in children. Some diseases are common, e.g. Tay Sachs, which is now prevented by prior testing, but many of these often devastating diseases are specific to a particular family. Advances in genetic technology make it possible to identify the mutation causing the disease. This can help the family prevent further affected children (e.g. by pre-implantation genetic diagnosis) and also provides important insights into the functions of various genes. We have already identified seven new disease genes in the past three years.\footnote{Shaare Zedek Research Report 2013, p55-57 \url{http://www.slideshare.net/ShaareZedekMedicalCenter/ss-27935732}}

Research activity in the Medical Genetics Institute includes collaboration with Palestinian colleagues to determine inherited mutations that affect breast cancer risk in Arab women\footnote{Shaare Zedek Research Report 2013, p55 \url{http://www.slideshare.net/ShaareZedekMedicalCenter/ss-27935732}}. The Breast Health Centre is also working on a comparative study examining the characteristics and stages of diagnosis of Arab and Jewish breast cancer patients in Jerusalem.\footnote{Shaare Zedek Research Report 2013, p211 \url{http://www.slideshare.net/ShaareZedekMedicalCenter/ss-27935732}}

**Shaare Zedek & UK Government**

Shaare Zedek’s collaborative approach to medicine was first raised in Parliament by Lord Turnberg during a Parliamentary debate in 2003: \footnote{Hansard \url{http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200203/ldhansrd/vo030319/text/30319-05.htm#30319-05_spnew11}}

“I was very encouraged by a meeting that I had with representatives of the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, who described efforts that they were making to work with a major hospital in Amman in Jordan and in Ramallah in the Palestinian territories. They were developing plans jointly to provide humanitarian aid of a medical type in a co-ordinated way for the survivors of conflicts in Iraq and other places in the Middle East. Will it be possible for the UK to work with those organisations to support them and others which are working in a co-ordinated operation?”

This project did not receive support from UK Government but contact remains between the institutions.\footnote{Shaare Zedek Research Report 2013, p211 \url{http://www.slideshare.net/ShaareZedekMedicalCenter/ss-27935732}}

We would welcome a visit by the Committee to the hospital to gain a greater understanding of Shaare Zedek’s work in medical collaboration across communities.\footnote{Shaare Zedek Research Report 2013, p55-57 \url{http://www.slideshare.net/ShaareZedekMedicalCenter/ss-27935732}}
Appendices

1. Impressions of Shaare Zedek
Letter written for Shaare Zedek UK newsletter from Councillor PPC Vikki Slade following a visit to Shaare Zedek, September 2013

As foreign aid and field hospitals arrive in the Philippines this week I am reminded of my inspirational trip to Israel and Palestine last month and the account from two members of the Israeli rescue mission to Haiti after their devastating earthquake.

Our LDFI (Liberal Democrat Friends of Israel) Parliamentary visit was intended to provide an understanding of the geo-political situation in Israel and Palestine and we were privileged to meet a range of political and social figures on both sides along with families living in Jerusalem who hosted us for their Shabbat dinners.

Our first encounter at the hospital was the Paediatric Dialysis Unit where I was struck by the sheer number of children from all ethnic backgrounds who suffer from genetic kidney disorders. We were told that this has become prevalent partly due to limited integration in small communities. These children have to come into the hospital on a daily or alternate daily basis, something which has an incredible impact on the family lives of those involved. I was heartened to watch parents sit with children from the opposite side of the political divide while their own parents went to pick up other siblings from school or leave the bedside for other reasons.

Elsewhere in the hospital we toured the Emergency department, funded by generous donations and named for a British family who support a number of medical establishments in Israel. Its design is unusual in that it forms a series of concentric circles, helping specialists to work across the unit more effectively, and it is built underground to make it resilient to the attacks that were a feature of Jerusalem in the past.

As a first time visitor to Jerusalem, the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre provided a real ray of hope among the political turmoil surrounding its historic building. A place of love, welcome to all whatever their race or religion. Of all the places we visited in the country, this was the place I witnessed the world in one place – staff, patients and visitors representing almost every nation of the world. Coming together with love and showing humanity’s similarities rather than focusing on our differences.

Cllr Vikki Slade
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
For UK General Election in Mid Dorset & North Poole