

AJMF NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN JEWISH MEDICAL FEDERATION | www.ajmf.org.au | SPRING 2014

PRESIDENT'S REPORT AJMF (VIC)

As I sit down to write this report I am mindful of the terrible toll the war in Israel has taken for both Israelis and Palestinians. The extremist regimes that fund Hamas led to a massive proliferation of underground tunnels and armaments to attack Israel. The subsequent portrayal of the conflict in the media as Israel being the aggressor and acting "disproportionally" provoked widespread anti-Semitic reaction, which has been disturbing for all of us.

Within the medical community we were appalled by the vicious letter published in the Lancet by Manduca et al. This virulent attack on Israeli doctors and academics was a flagrantly biased political attack on Israel. The Lancet subsequently published some rebuttals of the letter but consistently supported Manduca et al. Dr Tamir Wolf et al wrote "Battling ignorance in the Lancet" which we forwarded to our members to support. They received over 8000 supporters for their rebuttal from medical and scientific professionals. We also circulated to our members a petition encouraging the publishers of The Lancet, Elsevier to dismiss the editor, Richard Horton. To date this has not happened.

We held a successful clinical meeting with Dr Ian Katz speaking about "The anxious, depressed patient". We thank Astra Zeneca for their support of this meeting and Dr Sam Margis for his hard work in coordinating and planning this event.

I attended the AJMF mini-conference at Coolum and there were doctors from Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra at the meeting and although small in numbers we were strong in spirit. Dr Howard Goldenberg engaged us with his medical stories as well as with readings from his new book "Carrots and Jaffas". The medical presentations were of their usual high standard and the kosher catering was excellent. Our thanks to Dr Jason Kaplan, Mandy Chalmers and the NSW Branch for organising the mini-conference.

As we go to press, we will be hosting a movie night on Sunday October 12 at the Classic Cinema. The film, The Green Prince, is an Israeli documentary about the son of a Hamas founder who spied for Israel. On the night we are hoping to fundraise for Beit Halochem, which is a not for profit organisation that provides rehabilitation facilities and programs for disabled Israeli veterans and victims of terrorism.

On Sunday November 9 we are co-hosting a hypothetical evening with Mt Scopus parents association. The topic is "Children always know what is best for

them". Dr Paul Fineberg is our inimitable moderator who will be asking the thought provoking hypothetical questions. Those of you who have previously had the pleasure of Dr Fineberg's sharp wit and engaging style will know that this is not an event to be missed.

The AJMF AGM will be held on Sunday November 23 with a guest speaker, Dr Yayu Mekonnen. He is the first pediatric heart surgeon in Ethiopia and he is currently training at Wolfson Medical Centre in Tel Aviv with Save a Child's Heart. Details of this event will be sent out as they are finalized.

The next mini-conference we are planning will be held on March 6-8 2015 at Four Points by Sheraton in Geelong. This will be a fully kosher conference in Geelong and we hope that many members can join us for a relaxing and stimulating long weekend. The bi-annual summer AJMF conference is being planned for January 2016. We are considering having this conference aboard a cruise ship and are hoping to get feedback from our members about their interest in this event.

The committee and I wish you all a Shana Tova and hope that the New Year will bring peace and prosperity to you, your family and the people of Israel.

Miriam Kuttner
President AJMF Victoria

SAVE THE DATE

AJMF (VIC) & MT SCOPUS COLLEGE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION - HYPOTHETICAL (interactive event)

Sunday 9th November, 7:30 PM at Gandel Besen House,
15 Mayfield Street, East St Kilda.

Presenter: Dr Paul Fineberg

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist - and past president of AJMF (VIC)
will moderate the topic

"Jewish youth always know what is best for themselves"

To assist with catering, please RSVP to presvic@ajmf.org.au

AJMF (VIC) AGM

Sunday 23 November 2014

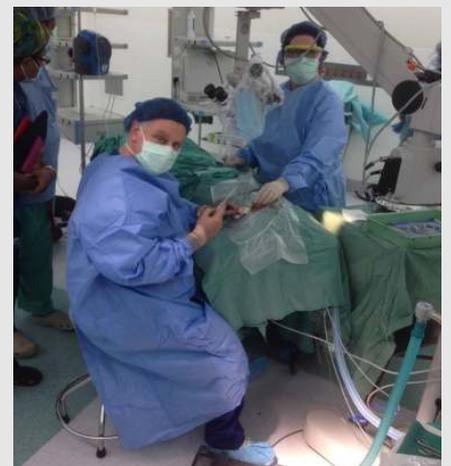
Guest Speaker: Dr Yayu Mekonnen

Dr Mekonnen is the first pediatric heart surgeon in Ethiopia and has been training at Wolfson Medical Centre in Tel Aviv with Save a Child's Heart.

Location and start time will be advised with the next eNewsletter and will be posted to the website closer to the date.

ISRAEL'S ENT MISSIONS TO FIJI

(see article on page 3)



Mr Michael Gordon performing microscopic surgery

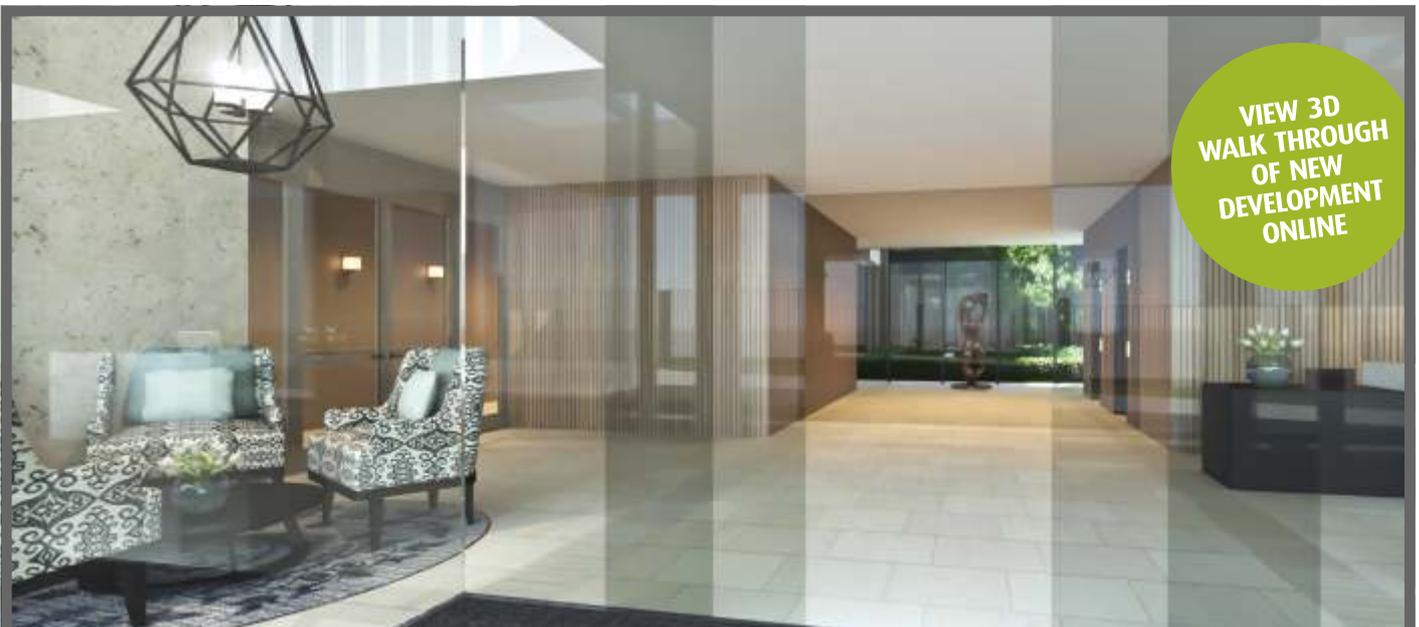
PROFESSOR PAUL ZIMMET RECEIVES HONORARY DOCTORATE FROM TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY



Professor Paul Zimmet AO is the Foundation Director, International Diabetes Institute, Melbourne, Australia. He recently received a citation from Tel Aviv University for his significant work on diabetes.

The Senate of Tel Aviv University, at its meeting on December 11th, resolved to confer upon you the degree of Doctor Philosophiae Honoris Causa, in recognition of your groundbreaking lifelong devotion to research, education and treatment of diabetes; raising awareness of diabetes as an international public health emergency; predicting the evolving diabetes epidemic that has led to a major worldwide focus on the global burden of diabetes and its escalation over the next decades; your design and leadership of the team carrying out the "AusDiab Study", the first national diabetes and obesity study in Australia; your research on other populations in the world providing new insights into genetics, the role of socio-cultural change; your publications of more than

700 scientific papers and reviews; your acclaim throughout the world through prestigious accolades, international and national awards, Officer of the Order of Australia, the first Australian to be Member of the Spanish Royal Academic of Medicine; your important collaboration with Israeli researchers, identifying many new genes involved in metabolic, nutritional and inflammatory pathways; and above all, your support of Tel Aviv University, establishing the first diabetes research scholarships, the annual donation of the Hendrik and Irene Gutwirth Prize in Diabetes Research, and your longstanding involvement, together with your wife, Vivien, in the advancement of Tel Aviv University.



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ISRAEL'S ENT MISSIONS TO FIJI

By Mr Michael L Gordon MBBS(Hons) FRACS; ENT Surgeon

It seems that most of the Pacific Island nations have been staunch supporters of Israel, and Fiji is a case in point. It is thus no surprise that in the course of their relationship Israel has offered aid to Fiji which is lacking in many basic facilities. This lack of services is not immediately evident to the average tourist going there on a resort type holiday and certainly from a medical perspective Fiji is very much in need of external aid missions and help.

The story of our missions dates back several years when Fijian discussion with the Israeli embassy in Canberra flagged ENT surgery as a significant area of need. The Israeli ambassador to Australia also covers the pacific islands and through the pacific island assistant at the Israeli embassy the AJMF via Ron Sweet was contacted. After extensive discussions and searching, myself and Eduard Pudel nominated to go on an ENT aid mission to Fiji, representing Israel, which was to be sponsored by Israel, Australian surgeons being cheaper to send than Israeli surgeons.

After a lot of organizing this eventually took place in November 2013 on a shoe-string budget. At that stage I had pointed out the fact that we needed to take a nurse and an anaesthetist however there was not enough money in the small budget for this. The AJMF came to the rescue at that stage with a significant monetary contribution that would allow this to happen. After some networking we were privileged to have acquired significant equipment and disposables donated by various companies totaling tens of thousand of dollars. Of note was the donation of two Sophono bone conduction electronic hearing implants which came in very handy for one patient in particular who we previously knew about.

The initial mission last year was so successful that this years mission was fully funded by the international aid department of the Israeli government. Yet again we had extremely generous donations from various companies totalling around 80,000 dollars. Our team this year consisted of myself (Michael Gordon ENT surgeon), Eduard Pudel (ENT surgeon), Dr Mark Fajgman (anaesthetist), Danielle Kiriati (nurse) and Ratu Vuki Komoala (Israel embassy representative to Fiji).

This year's mission although similar to last year was full of its own stories.

The journey had hardly begun on arrival in Nadi when our four crates of equipment along with a couple of suitcases were confiscated due to a paperwork bungle. Last years sagas started a bit earlier on in the piece when Edi realized on the way to the airport that he had forgotten his passport at home so at least this year we got to Nadi before the fun and games started.



Performing highly delicate ENT surgery



From left: Mr Eduard Pudel(ENT Surgeon), Dr Neil Sharma (Fiji Minister for Health), Dr Mark Fajgman (Anaesthetist), Mr Shmuel ben Shmuel (Israeli Ambassador), Mr Michael Gordon (ENT Surgeon), Danielle Kiriati (nurse)

Amongst the confiscated items in the crates were all my kosher food and all of Edi and Mark's clothes. It was 36 hours before our equipment and belongings were released, returned and driven from Nadi to Suva.

Our work was undertaken at Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva. A very old large colonial hospital in many parts very dilapidated. I would guess it is about 300 beds. It is without sealed windows and very packed in with patients. It was thus exciting to find that since we left last year they had built a couple of new operating theatres which we were to use. The excitement waned somewhat when we found that the wall suction was not functional a lot of the time with a flashing red wall light and irritating beeper sound commencing on its frequent failure. Diathermy machine failure was common in particular as they re-use disposable diathermy pads and the operating microscope was an old 1950s Ziess OPMI 1 which works with bulbs of which there were only two in Fiji in the hospital and both of them blew during the course of operating. I managed to find an old ophthalmic/neuro microscope which we re-jigged and then were able to complete our otologic surgery.

Our schedule consisted of consulting all day on the first day and then operating that late afternoon and for five subsequent days during which we managed to complete 24 major ENT cases. Last year we completed 28 cases.

Cases included nasal surgeries, major ear surgeries including mastoidectomy, tympanoplasties and ossicular chain reconstructions as well as head and neck surgeries in particular including one laryngectomy with neck dissections. For some of the time we were able to run two simultaneous theatres but needless to say the pace of getting cases done was much slower than back home.

Another highlight this time was a visit by our team to the Chinese hospital ship "The Peace Ark" which was docked on a short term aid mission at the port in Suva. This ship is a 300 bed floating hospital with 8 operating theatres and 5 floors including out patient clinics. We visited the ENT clinic and met the ships ENT surgeon who is even shorter than me!

We finished with a meeting with the Israeli ambassador to Australia and the Fijian health minister, an ex-gynecologist Dr Neil Sharma.

Fijian media including the local television station and newspapers came to interview us. We watched a significant news item with interviews and footage of us operating on the evening news that night. The next morning in the newspaper there was a headline "Israel sends medical aid to Fiji." When I read this I thought to myself: mission accomplished.

ANTI ISRAEL BIAS IN THE LANCET

In July, The Lancet published an extremely biased, anti-Israel letter by Manduca et al entitled "An open letter for the people in Gaza", which aroused a wave of protest from the international medical community. The decision to accept the letter was made by the Editor-in-Chief, Richard Horton, who also delayed publishing responses refuting the allegations made. One of the first rebuttal letters, published in The Lancet on 30 July, was from Dr Tamir Wolf and his colleagues, which was partly written from a Tel Aviv bomb-shelter during the Israel-Gaza conflict. A large excerpt of this letter follows.

BATTLING ANTI ISRAEL BIAS IN THE LANCET

by Tamir Wolf, Danielle H Brown, Shachar M Aharony

Reality is far from black and white as was depicted in the recent hate-filled Correspondence by Paola Manduca and colleagues. The authors of this Correspondence hijacked The Lancet, spewing propaganda that would fail any peer review. Under false claims of "no competing interests", these authors, deeply involved in pro-Palestinian organisations, cower behind their medical degrees to slander Israel, spread Hamas defamations, and betray our profession. We are baffled by The Lancet's decision to publish such a slanted, evidence-less, open letter.¹

The death of innocent women and children is horrifying. We know - our families lost everyone and everything during the holocaust, which is why we denounce the phrasing of "massacre" by the open letter's authors. We have treated Israeli and Palestinian patients, without distinction, throughout our army service, during times of conflict and calm. We have always maintained objectivity and medical ethics in trying situations. Even in the present conflict, doctors continue to treat Palestinians in Israeli hospitals.

In August, 2005, Israel disengaged from Gaza, dismantled settlements, and displaced more than 10,000 Israelis. It withdrew its military and civilian presence from every inch of Gaza, effectively ending the occupation. Israel continued to uphold its obligations under the fourth Geneva Convention in matters where it continues to have effective control, such as providing water and electricity. By contrast with Manduca and colleagues' claims,¹ Israel has always allowed the passage of food, medicine, and fuel into Gaza.

In 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza in a violent coup killing 550 Palestinians, and leaving hundreds injured. Since then, the people of Gaza have been living under tyranny.

Manduca and colleagues¹ argue that Israel's policies led to hunger, thirst, pollution, shortage of medicines... They claim "building materials have been blockaded so that schools, homes, and institutions cannot be properly rebuilt." This is not true. Over the past decade, Hamas has received billions of dollars in foreign aid. Instead of building schools and hospitals, Hamas enriched its leadership,² and invested in weaponry, tunnels, and ammunition bunkers.³ The people of Gaza were left in ruins long before these past few days.

Recently, Hamas again resorted to violence against Israel. The international community has recognised Israel's right to self-defence, both against rockets and terror tunnels. There is definitely a moral asymmetry in this conflict. Israel's strategy is aimed at protecting life, whereas Hamas' strategy has, quite rightly, provoked the condemnation by the European Union (EU): "The EU strongly condemns calls on the civilian population of Gaza to provide themselves as human shields."^{4,5} Terrorists have been using UN facilities, and ambulances; hospitals such as Shifa, "[have] become a de facto headquarters for Hamas leaders, who can be seen in the hallways and offices".⁶

Israel has been working tirelessly to develop precision weapons and warning mechanisms to minimise civilian casualties. Such measures (text messages, leaflets, and repeated announcements) surpass NATO's operations in precision and in proportionality calculus. For Israel, civilians are never a target. Unfortunately, it seems that Hamas' tactics ensure maximum civilian casualties among their own people.

Israel should not apologise for its low death rates. It has spent billions of dollars on developing the world's most advanced civil defence systems. Hamas has done nothing for its citizens.

Manduca and colleagues claim to hold a moral high ground. Here the asymmetry of morality is most visible. Israeli physicians have treated hundreds of Syrian casualties and offer open-heart surgery (through the Save a Child's Heart programme) to children from the Palestinian territories, Iraq, Iran, and many other countries that do not even recognise the State of Israel. When the Israeli Defence Forces establish a field hospital to treat Palestinian civilians, it has been targeted by Hamas.⁷ The high moral ground rests neither with Hamas nor those defending it.

The Lancet must practice objectivity, promote informative dialogue and discussion, and refrain from publishing inaccuracies and lies that widen existing gaps between parties already in conflict. The publication of this correspondence is a first step in the right direction.

The full letter including references, along with the original Manduca et al letter and subsequent correspondence published by The Lancet, can be accessed via: www.thelancet.com/gaza-letter-2014-responses

We emailed Dr Wolf in September and received the following update:

"Thanks so very much for your note. Wow, it seems like a lifetime has passed since the Lancet fiasco happened. I've since put on uniform, joined the troops in Gaza in what was to be a very difficult war, and only recently managed to return to "normal" civilian life, and even plan my wedding. Our response was eventually published, albeit in an abridged format.

With your help and that of many others, we were able to gather up 8000 medical and scientific professional supporters. There were a few additional rebuttal letters published from Canadian physicians, [Israeli] Ministry of Health Officials and our Nobel laureates. The Lancet's marketing-power was used solely to aid in defamation of Israel, so the numbers may be lower in comparison, but our spirits were lifted by the magnitude of support we did receive, and by the willingness of colleagues around the world to help spread our thoughts, and indeed, battle ignorance.

On behalf of Danielle, Shachar and myself, please convey a heartfelt thank you and our sincere admiration and appreciation for all that you and your members have done.

Tamir Wolf



Tamir Wolf

LANCET EDITOR VISITS ISRAEL

From the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, October 2, 2014

The editor of The Lancet, Dr Richard Horton, said in Israel that he "deeply regrets" the divisiveness caused by the open letter published in the British medical journal accusing Israel of a "massacre" in Gaza.

Dr Richard Horton in a statement at the Rambam Medical Centre in Haifa said that he "deeply, deeply regrets the completely unnecessary polarization" caused by the letter published in July to the people of Gaza during this summer's conflict in the coastal strip between Israel and Hamas.

NGO Monitor, a Jerusalem-based research institute that monitors nongovernmental organizations, last week unearthed evidence tying two of the letters' authors to supporting the neo-nazi, white supremacist and Holocaust denier, David Duke.

In his statement in Haifa, Horton condemned contributors to The Lancet who promote explicitly anti-Semitic materials, expressed a new understanding of Israeli realities including the complexities of the Arab-Israel conflict, and pledged a new relationship with Israel. Horton also said he was "personally horrified at the offensive [pro David Duke] video

that was forwarded by two of the authors of that letter"

Following his remarks, NGO Monitor said in a statement that it was "urgent that the letter be removed from The Lancet's website and a formal retraction and apology be published prominently, both on the website and the next hard copy issue."

While Horton said, "I will be publishing what I have just said in The Lancet next week." He did not say specifically that he would retract the letter.

AJMF postscript: While Horton expressed embarrassment at publishing a letter written by people associated with David Duke, he failed to explain how such an esteemed journal that has an ethos of peer review and fact checking lapsed so easily. He also failed to address why the pecuniary interests and affiliations of the authors were not disclosed, nor did he explain the extraordinary inclusion of an online electronic poll inviting readers to support the Manduca et al letter.

We await the next actions of the publishers of The Lancet, Elsevier.

PROFESSOR JON KALMAN RESEARCH FOCUS

Professor Jon Kalman was awarded an NHMRC excellence award for being ranked by his peers as the top practitioner fellow nationally.

Professor Jonathan Kalman is a clinician-scientist who received his MBBS and PhD from the University of Melbourne. He completed post-doctoral research at the University of California, and is the current Director of Cardiac Electrophysiology and Deputy Director of Cardiology at the Royal Melbourne Hospital and Professor of Medicine at the University of Melbourne.

Over the past two decades Professor Kalman has developed a National and International reputation in the field of cardiac arrhythmia research and particularly arrhythmias originating in the atrium. The focus of this work has been to understand the pathophysiology and mechanisms underlying atrial arrhythmias and the development of curative approaches.

His research work includes describing:

- (i) the anatomic distribution, and mapping and ablation techniques for focal atrial tachycardias;
- (ii) the mechanisms of typical and atypical atrial flutters with description of curative ablation based on these mechanisms;
- (iii) the factors involved in mechanical "stunning" of the atrium in patients with atrial arrhythmias and the resultant stroke risk;
- (iv) the nature of atrial electrical and structural remodelling in atrial fibrillation, conditions leading to AF and the mechanisms underlying atrial fibrillation.

Professor Kalman has an international reputation and his ongoing research is focused on both preventive interventions for atrial fibrillation and interventional cure of the arrhythmia by catheter ablation.

He has over 220 peer-reviewed publications, authored 30 book chapters and given over 150 invited lectures at national and international meetings.



Professor Kalman has trained a generation of Australian electrophysiologists and has supervised 20 PhD candidates, many of whom have won prestigious National and International prizes and fellowships.

AJMF NEWS



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Published by the
Australian Jewish Medical Federation
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Caulfield Junction
VIC 3161

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