By all accounts, the 17th annual Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Course in Israel was a tremendous success. In November, two-dozen American and Canadian healthcare professionals flew to Israel to participate in the program, which included inspiring lectures and hands-on drills. Attendees toured the Israel Ministry of Health (MOH) war room in Tel-Aviv; the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Medical Corps Training Base in the Negev; plus a number of medical institutions, notably the Ziv Medical Center in Zefat, Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, and Rambam emergency underground hospital in Haifa.

Over the past 13 years, this five-day, state-of-the-art training program, coordinated jointly by APF, MOH and IDF Medical Corps, has provided training as well as Category 1 Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits to more than 300 North American doctors, nurses, paramedics and therapists. Thanks to APF, American mainstream medicine has the opportunity to learn from Israel’s vast knowledge in the area of emergency preparedness.

Said one recent participant, “You challenged me and taught me things about which I knew nothing. You made me think. I am very happy to have taken the course and met so many wonderful medical practitioners.”

For information about next year’s Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Course in Israel, please contact the APF office by phone (617-232-5382), by email (info@apfmed.org) or by visiting our website (www.apfmed.org).

President’s Message

Dear APF Supporter,

I am writing to you from Israel, during the annual Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Course co-sponsored by APF and the Israel Ministry of Health. Unfortunately I am sad to report that once again Israel's normal life rhythms and routines are being shattered by daily acts of violence and terror throughout the land.

Stabbings, shootings, stonings, exploding Molotov cocktails and vehicular homicide have become all-too-common events. First responders, healthcare providers and hospital systems are on high alert, ready to provide lifesaving care, often under the threat of attack. Tragically, innocent civilians, including children, pregnant women and the elderly, have been targeted on a daily basis.

APF is in constant contact with the Ministry of Health to send medical volunteers who can provide patient care when needed. By conducting our Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Course in Israel, we show our solidarity with Israel, its people and its healthcare system. Furthermore, it gives us an opportunity to meet the heroic individuals who are protecting and providing care to the population.

Last year I was in Israel during the Protective Edge Gaza War. Again the people’s ability to cope with ongoing violence was tested physically, psychologically and socially. Now is the time to band together and do everything we can to provide support for Israel’s healthcare system, which is tasked with treating the victims of terror.

In January I will be concluding my term as APF President. It has truly been an honor to serve with our dedicated Board and members. I have had the great opportunity to meet and work together with Israel’s healthcare leadership and providers who stand on the front lines. As I turn over the presidency to Dr. Robert Kelman—who has already demonstrated his boundless energy and tireless efforts on behalf of the organization—I ask that you continue to support our efforts, which include:

- The first and only Emergency Medical Volunteer (EMV) program with the Israel MOH to respond to catastrophic events
- Fellowship grants for Israeli physicians to study at top North American institutions
- Research grants that advance essential medical research in Israel
- The APF/Birthright program, which takes Jewish American medical students to Israel
- Training for Israeli nurses: in an Intensive Trauma Course in Israel plus advanced study in the U.S.
- The annual Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Course in Israel
- Bringing Israeli experts and leaders to the U.S. for interactive meetings and seminars
- APF special programs, including the purchase of a lifesaving shelter in a Sderot school that provides medical equipment for emergency responders and has saved more than 30 children.

May we be blessed by G-d to see a true, lasting future of peace, prosperity and good health.

Sincerely,

Michael Frogel, MD
President APF

A Course in Emergency Disaster Preparedness

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APF Fellows for 2015 – 2016

APF fellowships were established in 1950 to help train Israeli physicians in specialty care. The program continues to award supplemental fellowship grants to gifted Israeli physicians to advance their education at North American medical centers.

Dr. Tomer Adar Awarded the Rosenblatt Foundation Grant

Dr. Tomer Adar has a simple goal in life: He wants to save people from cancer before they get it. But that’s no pipe dream. As Adar puts it, “In other cancers, we talk about ‘early diagnosis’ and mean finding the tumor when it is still small and localized.” But as a gastroenterologist who specializes in familial cancer syndromes of the digestive system, he tries to “get to cancer before it actually occurs.”

Because of his pioneering work, APF selected Adar, a 37-year-old Tel Aviv native, as the recipient of its 2015–2016 Claire and Emmanuel Rosenblatt Foundation Grant. The $25,000-a-year award will allow him to continue his postdoctoral fellowship training in North America.

At his gastro-genetic clinic at Shaare Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, Adar and a geneticist have been working with families to identify genetic syndromes that cause cancer. Patients testing positive receive recommendations for tailored surveillance program, and those who test negative are spared multiple tests, some of which are performed annually.

Says Adar, “I hope that when I return to Israel, I will be able to provide better, more up-to-date care for patients. I expect to learn skills here that I cannot learn anywhere else.”

Newest Kass Research Award Recipient: Dr. Shlomo Elias

When he served in the Israeli Defense Forces, Shlomo Elias did research and translation for the military’s intelligence arm. Today, as a hematologist at Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem, Dr. Shlomo Elias researches and attempts to “translate” the molecular world of blood, particularly malignancies.

Elias’ cutting-edge research seeks to understand how cancer proteins evade the immune system’s natural killer (NK) cells. “The tumor develops a way to be smarter than the immune system,” says Elias. “It’s like it has a shield.” And with the Kass Award to help him, Elias hopes to outsmart those tumors.

The Dr. Edward H. Kass Research Award, named for the eponymous Distinguished Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and past president of APF (1986–90), is conferred annually on a promising young Israeli physician conducting research at a medical institution or university.
Special Training for Israeli Nurses

Nurses are vital to patient care, a fact APF is keenly aware of, and that is why we offer two separate grant programs for Israeli nurses. Dr. Richard Hirsh of Ohio has established one of them—the Solomon Hirsh Nurses Education Fund, named in memory of his father. Since its inception 27 years ago, the grant has gone to more than 80 appreciative nurses. This fund has given them the opportunity to visit distinguished medical institutions in the U.S. and to learn the latest methodologies in their field of expertise, which they can then apply to patient care back home in Israel.

APF also sponsors a course for Israeli nurses working in different specialties at the Teaching Center for Trauma, Emergency and Mass Casualty Situations at the Rambam Healthcare campus in Haifa. This program, which teaches participants about nurses’ roles in mass-casualty and disaster-preparedness situations, is currently offered once a year, but APF hopes to garner enough support from generous donors to increase the frequency to three times a year.

Renovating a Special Cemetery

It’s easy to overlook the old Anglican cemetery on Yeffet Street in Jaffa, next to the oldest school in Israel, Tabeetha, founded in 1863. This is a shame, because buried in this unassuming spot are many illustrious historical figures with local ties, including Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, who first described a form of lymphoma that today bears his name. Hodgkin was the personal physician of Sir Moses Haim Montefiore, a British financier, activist and philanthropist who promoted economic development, education and public health in the Jewish community of the Levant (in modern-day Israel).

Neglected for many years, the cemetery had fallen into a progressive state of disintegration. Fences were collapsing, tree roots were upending graves, and most of the crosses had disappeared. But thanks to a generous donation from Amalie Kass, widow of Dr. Edward Kass, past APF President, all the graves have recently been renovated and new crosses placed on them. Special attention was given to Hodgkin’s grave. Upon Hodgkin’s death in 1866, Moses Montefiore erected an obelisk on the grave. This has been restored and surrounded by new stone paving. Next to Hodgkin rests the distinguished British Brigadier General Thomas Michel, who died in Jaffa in 1841. Other notables buried here include Dr. Kaiser Ghoreyeb, the first doctor of the Anglican Hospital, and its founder, Bessy Managan.

This is a wonderful accomplishment, but the cemetery needs ongoing uprooting of invasive tree roots and the constant clearing away of vegetation. April 2016 marks the 150-year anniversary of Dr. Hodgkin’s death. For the 100th anniversary, in 1966, the British Ambassador, Israel’s health minister and private doctors and clergymen held the last ceremony in honor of the famous doctor who dedicated his life to Tikkun Olam (improving the world). Perhaps on this next important Yahrzeit, the community will see fit to honor these great men and women by committing the resources needed to maintain their final resting place.

APF Birthright Trip for Medical Students

In 2006 we created an annual, 10-day cross-cultural APF Birthright program for American medical, nursing and healthcare students. The goal is for them to experience Israel as a tourist while learning about the practice of medicine there and to strengthen their bond with the State of Israel. To date, more than 350 students have participated in this program.
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Shalom From the New President

I’m Dr. Robert Kelman, and I am proud to introduce myself for the first time as the President Elect of APF. I’m an emergency physician from Detroit, Michigan, and have been involved with this stellar organization for more than 13 years. Among the greatest gifts it’s given me is being able to form an abiding bond as a health professional with our Israeli counterparts.

I first learned about APF after the horrific Park Hotel bombing in Netanya, Israel, on the first night of Pesach in 2002. Eager to help, I was elated to discover this organization, which is the only one of its kind with a disaster registry to be endorsed by the Israel Ministry of Health. Almost immediately I signed up for its Emergency Medical Volunteers registry and joined an active roster of North American volunteer doctors, nurses, medics, therapists and other healthcare professionals who fly to Israel on a moment’s notice to man hospitals and clinics when their Israeli staffs rush to treat crisis victims.

In 2005 I took APF’s Disaster Preparedness Course in Israel, and over the next decade got deeply involved in developing a robust Michigan Chapter. When I take over as president, I look forward to expanding APF’s reach, including bringing more medical professionals into the volunteer registry. I also plan to open additional regional chapters and recruit world-class speakers to discuss our work as well as developments in the healthcare field in Israel. This will widen our circle of volunteers and supporters. And the larger that circle, the more help we can provide.

But I can’t do this without your help. I welcome your suggestions for ways we can grow. Your active participation is what enables us to fulfill our mission to helping Israel.

This year, APF organized and planned along with Drs. Paul Scherer, Marlene Reid, and Larry Harkless a Podiatric Scientific Mission to Israel in November. More than 30 American and Canadian healthcare professionals participated in this amazing trip, which included inspiring lectures from Israeli and American speakers. Attendees visited 3 medical centers as well as the IDF–Airborne Rescue & Evacuation Unit 669. The participants also floated in the Dead Sea, toured Masada, visited Yad Vashem and much more.

The Mission provided Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits through Western College of Podiatric Medicine.

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Editors: Deborah Cushman and Suzanne Gerber

AMERICAN PHYSICIANS FELLOWSHIP FOR MEDICINE IN ISRAEL (APF), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization of physicians and healthcare professionals, is committed to advancing the state of medical education, research, and care in Israel by assisting in the training of young Israeli physicians and healthcare professionals, and in fostering ties between the North American and Israeli healthcare communities.