

Annual Congress and Medicare Expo on **Trauma & Critical Care**

March 07-09, 2016 Madrid, Spain

Trauma care across closed borders

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Since February 2013, Syrian citizens who were injured in the civil war have been treated in Israel. The closest hospital to the Israel-Syria border, Ziv Medical Center, has treated over 600 patients. Patients arrived initially with war related injuries, but, as word spread of the care they received, patients also came for the treatment of chronic medical conditions. As civil war continues, reports indicate a collapse of health services in many parts of Syria. The care provided in Israel has been life-saving for men, women and children; and yet, they are accepting care from people they have regarded for generations to be their enemy. Crossing the border into Israel may be regarded in Syria as an illegal or punishable act. The identity of the patients is, therefore, carefully protected. Crucial to their reception, orientation and reassurance as soon as they arrive in the hospital, is the communication, in Arabic, between the social worker and the patients. As such the social worker is a crucial member of the team. Initially, some of the patients arrived unaware that they had been transported to Israel. They were afraid, reluctant to eat the food and weary of the staff. Patients, however, were extremely grateful for the high level care that they received, and staff at the hospital were at pains to welcome them and put them at their ease. Children arrived with relatives or sometimes alone. The hospital organised radios and access to computers and books and received donations of clothing and games.

Biography

David Fuchs is a Trauma Co-ordinator of Ziv Medical Center. He has worked in Trauma Care and Emergency Medicine for over 20 years. He is a Senior Nurse in the Emergency Department and is responsible for Acute Trauma Care, the Trauma Room, training in Trauma and Trauma research.

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