

ALPHA OMEGA

A History of The Charitable Trust of the London Chapter and its predecessor the Dental Group

The idea of a Dental School in Israel was discussed at the International Dental Congress in London in 1952. The population of Israel had grown to 1.5 million since 1948 and the number of dentists needed was much below average. The need for its own Dental School had been recognised by the profession in Israel for some time and the presence in London of two Israeli dentists, Dr. Sussman and Dr. Mishory, enabled other Jewish dentists to hear at first hand a picture of dentistry and dentists in Israel. This led to the formation of a group whose aim was to gain support for the setting up of a provisional school. Another Israeli dentist, Dr. Samuel Lewin-Epstein, went to the U.S.A. where he had contacts, to gain support from Jewish dentists there.

At the Congress a group agreed the following aim: to erect, equip and maintain a provisional Dental School at the Hebrew University for clinical studies, until a permanent school can be established. To move this forward, it was decided to form a World Federation for an Israel Dental School (WFIDS) with Dr. Bruno Schrotter of London and Professor Isaac Schour of Illinois as Co-Chairman and Dr. A. Sussman of Tel Aviv as Secretary.

The greatest problem facing the new Federation was finance. It could not expect a great deal of help from the Israeli government nor from the Hebrew University so the financing would have to come almost exclusively from outside Israel. An agreement was reached with the Alpha Omega Fraternity in U.S.A. for them to lead the fund-raising in USA and Canada with other interested groups together with The Friends of the Hebrew University and other well-wishers. Meanwhile the Federation would cover the approach to further sources worldwide.

London joined the effort by forming a Dental Group of The Friends of the Hebrew University and were in the forefront of fund-raising for the new school. Dr.G Cowan was elected Chairman, Dr. W. Grossman as Treasurer, Dr. G Wootliff as secretary and Drs. L. Becker, H. Sherwood, L. Werber, M.Woolf and Mrs. R. Bienenstock as committee members. Dr. Bruno Schrotter was also invited ex-officio from WFIDS.

The London Group held its first function in March 1954 to launch a campaign to raise an initial sum of £15,000. A dinner was held, at which the Guest of Honour was Dr. Charles Hill, a Government Minister, who opened the appeal. He was supported by Alderman Leslie Lever MP who later became Lord Mayor of Manchester.

In 1955, members of the World Federation, led by Dr Schrotter, visited the infant school in Jerusalem to see what progress had been made in setting up the provisional school. He arranged for the London group to host a reception for Dr Harry M Seldin, a leading member of the world Federation from New York, who gave a very up-beat report on what was happening in Jerusalem.

Various functions were arranged by the London group and in 1956 a Boxing Tournament between a team of amateurs from Israel and a team from the London Amateur Boxing Association raised a considerable sum of money.

In November 1956, the Dental Group gave a reception in honour of Dr Ino Sciaky, the Secretary of the School and the First Dean, and also Professor R B Bradlaw CBE, Dean of the Newcastle-On-Tyne Dental School who spoke in support of the School.

In the four years 1954 – 1958, the London Group were able to donate gifts of equipment and supplies to the Hebrew University which included ten Ritter Units, which were installed in the main clinic in the Straus Health Centre on Jaffa Road until new premises could be built. Six dental chairs were also provided by a non-Jewish well-wisher together with books, instruments, microscopes and complete

student kits and many other items which were also needed. A further six units were provided by private benefactors.

In 1959, the first 12 graduates qualified and some were encouraged to go abroad for postgraduate studies. Financial help for these graduates also had to be raised from both within and outside of Israel as it was felt that their future roll would be of vital importance in extending the base for future and teaching.

Fundraising continued around the world and London arranged various functions whenever possible and especially when international figures in the dental field were here on visits. Contact with the WFIDS continued and requests for specific items were met as soon as possible. Israel's population continued to rise to over 2 million and the number of dentists stood at 1000 (with 400 unqualified "technical" dentists). The workload was enormous and with a high average of practitioners the training of the new students became even more urgent. Plans for the new school building were being drawn up together with Hebrew University and Hadassah and it was left to the WFIDS and its supporters to come up with the finance.....which they did!!!!

All our efforts were finally rewarded with the opening of the new school building at Ein Kerem in 1964, on the Hadassah Hospital site where the Medical School and those for Nursing and Pharmacy were already doing well.

The wars of 1956 and 1967 (and later 1973) unfortunately forced the staff of the dental school to develop great expertise in the treatment of facial and associated injuries and the profession in Israel became world leaders in this field but at great cost to the Nation.

The London Chapter of Alpha Omega was founded in 1969 and the members of the Dental Group joined the Chapter to continue the fundraising activities. There were musical recitals and suppers as well as a film premiere of "A Bridge Too Far" in London's West End. The proceeds of these had to be forwarded to Israel though the Friends of the Hebrew University.

To solve this problem it was decided to form our own Charitable Trust which was finalised in 1972. The Trustees appointed in 1973 determined the areas the trust was allowed to support by the legal limits of the Trust Deed. These were "to the advancement of dental education, research and care wherever it is needed."

Education and research was to assist studies and programmes in relation to teaching dentistry and enable more students to pursue both undergraduate and postgraduate education; also to provide the equipment for teaching and research into dental and related diseases.

Care was to support the provision of facilities, which would benefit the realisation of the ideals of the Trust.

Following the success of the recitals and the film premiere, further concerts were arranged in 1976, another film premiere in 1977 of Agatha Christie's "Evil Under the Sun" and two celebrity concerts in 1978 and 1980 at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London's South Bank complex.

The Ladies auxiliary raised funds from a fashion show and other functions.

In total, all these activities produced \$270,000 between 1972 and 1980. However in 1984 a clinical symposium made a profit of £1800 which suggested another way of raising funds. Using clinical meetings with prominent clinicians from Israel, USA, UK and Europe for who sponsorship could be obtained and this has proved to be highly productive, combined with trade shows.

The Trustees now had to consider whether larger projects might be undertaken. They drew up a list of the main headings:-

- (a) Major projects for Buildings and Equipment
- (b) Libraries
- (c) Recognition of student achievement
- (d) Students grants and fellowships
- (e) Special cases of need at home and abroad

Since this time, the following projects have been supported:

MAJOR PROJECTS

1. Hebrew University AO Dental School

Children's Clinic
 Paedodontic Department
 Projectors, x-ray viewers etc
 Refurbishment of Prosthodontic clinic as part of the "Bridge the Gap" Campaign

2. Tel-Aviv Dental School

Recovery Room
 Microbiology Department
 New Lecture Theatre
 Focus on Future Campaign
 Radio-Visiography Unit
 Special Project for the Dean

3. Poriyah Hospital

Maxillo-Facial Department
 Dental surgery in the main hospital so patients would not need to be transferred
 Equipment for Maxillo-Facial Department

4. Ezrat Cholim clinic in Jerusalem

Dental surgery equipment

5. Sarah Herzog Hospital

Dental Surgery equipment

6. Jaffa Institute Clinic

Dental surgery equipped and new instrument provided

Libraries

Jerusalem School - Books and journals for students and staff updated with gifts when available.

Tel Aviv School - Books and journals for students and staff updated with gifts when available.

Poriyah Hospital Maxillo-Facial Unit – Special library in Memory of Dr David Rabin, founder member of the London Chapter who held every office and gave great service to the London Chapter.

Recognition of Student Achievement

Annual student prizes at Hebrew University Dental School:

- (i) In memory of Professor Ino Sciaky for final year student in Oral Medicine

- (ii) In memory of Prof. Julius Michman for 4th year student in Prosthodontics
- (iii) The Murray Woolf Prize in Orthodontics for final year student

These currently provide \$500 each annually and a certificate.

- (iv) Essay prize competitions at London Dental Schools in various subjects periodically.

Student Grants and fellowships

Support grant for Israeli student at Glasgow University for M.Sc. in electron microscopy.

Support given to programme for graduates to study in British Canadian and US dental schools for 1-3 years.

Grant to final year student at London University to complete studies.

Special support for registrar from Poriyah to study at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital in East Grinstead specialist Maxillo-Facial Unit.

Support grants for electives by British students at Poriyah Hospital from Royal London and Guys, Kings & St Thomas's Dental Schools of London University.

Donor grant (possible \$2000 - \$8000) to Professor Zeles Dean of Dental Faculty Budapest University.

Grant for research at Hebrew University Dental School from donor of 1,016.99 Euros.

Special Projects

Oral hygiene programme instituted at the Ravenswood residential village for individuals with learning difficulties. Supported since 1991.

Jewish relief for Jews in Kiev dental centre.

Dental implants for victims of suicide bombs in Jerusalem.

Anaesthetic equipment for special unit treating spastic children near London UK.

The Trustees are always aware of the wider areas from which appeals are coming and consider each case to see if it can be covered by the limits of the Trust. However, the main emphasis still remains the provision of as much help as the funds will allow, and especially to the Tel Aviv and Haddassah dental schools.

The last great project suggested by the Chapter Council of a fully equipped ambulance for Magen David Adom was handed over in Jerusalem in 2003 as reported in the newsletter. In all, and since 1972 when the Trust was founded, \$1,272,750 has been distributed to those causes for which the Trust was established.

We are indebted to the Trustees and the many supporters for the success of the London Chapter of Alpha Omega Charitable Trust over so many years. There have only been two previous Chairmen of the Trust, Bernard Herson and Harold Preiskel, and the new Chairman, Professor Andrew Eder, is determined to maintain the standard set. The work goes on.

Murray Woolf
London, March 2004