



Orthopaedic Trauma Course – Amman, Jordan

July 2 – 4, 2009

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This spring the [International Medical Corps](#) (IMC) approached the [OTA](#) and asked us to help train orthopaedic surgeons in Amman, Jordan. The IMC is a humanitarian organization and as part of its mission to “help people help themselves” it arranges professional development conferences. An orthopaedic conference was requested and funded by the U.S. State Department to address the needs of Iraqi refugees in Amman, Jordan. After the 2003 Gulf War, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis fled to Jordan. The CIA estimates that more than 2 million Iraqis fled to Syria and Jordan during the last six years. This has placed enormous strain upon the delivery of healthcare in Jordan, a country with a native population of six million. This is in addition to about 1,835,000 Palestinian refugees that have settled in Jordan seeking refuge from other conflicts. The Iraqis in Jordan are recognized as refugees but lack the same civil rights as Jordanian citizens.

After six years many are without work and while the country's official unemployment rate is 13%, unofficially it is listed as 30% (all above figures from The [CIA World Factbook](#)). This challenges the Iraqis to meet their basic needs including healthcare. Although Jordan has one of the best healthcare systems in the Middle East, the massive influx of refugees has greatly compromised the access to care. Some of these refugees are Iraqi orthopaedic surgeons who are challenged by a significant shortage of resources including access to ongoing educational development. We found them highly motivated to learn and provide care to their countrymen.

The OTA under the direction of Steven Morgan (Denver OTA active member) organized a 3-day trauma course focusing on orthopaedic trauma care. Dr. Morgan was joined by Dr. Andrew Pollak (Baltimore), Dr. Bo Kagan (Florida), and Dr. David Templeman (Minnesota). Approximately 120 people attended the course including orthopaedic surgeons, nurses, and other healthcare assistants. Our hosts were gracious and our lectures were well received and were followed by meaningful discussion sessions.

After the conclusion of the course, we were guests of three Iraqi surgeons who worked for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders/MSF). Our gracious colleagues, Dr Rasheed M. Fakhri, Dr. Ali M.K. Al-Ani and

Dr Majd Alrass guided us on rounds at the Red Crescent Hospital that MSF shares in Amman. This site cares for selected Iraqi refugees with blast injuries in need of orthopaedic care or maxillofacial reconstructions. The patients are initially screened in Iraq and then travel to Amman. Most of the patients present more than two years after their injuries with non-unions and bone loss that are frequently complicated by infection. As our visit progressed we were incredulous that in case after case reviewed, nearly all of the patients suffered from the most difficult problems seen in orthopaedic traumatology. This is one of the few sites where injured civilians can receive reconstructive surgery without the need to pay.

All of us are left with the belief that the OTA has the potential to help improve orthopaedic trauma care in the Middle East. The visit established great camaraderie with our orthopaedic colleagues in Amman and left us with the hope of returning to help in the future.

www.imcworldwide.org

www.cia.gov/library/the-world-factbook