



Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders

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Graduated from the Dental School in Jerusalem in 1992. Specializes in Oral Medicine. Senior Lecturer, Director of the Salivary Glands Clinic, Director of the D. Walter Cohen Middle East Center and Chairperson of the Alumni Association.

In September 2006, almost a decade after the opening of the D. Walter Cohen Center for Dental Education in the Middle East, Profs. Adam Stabholz and Musa Bajali, Dean of the Al-Quds University Dental School, were invited to the FDI congress in Stockholm.

The two Deans described the vision and the challenges involved in the cooperation between their schools in the shadow of Middle East relationships – “Health Diplomacy: Building Innovative Partnerships to Expand Oral Health on a Regional Level.”

The aim of the Stockholm gathering was to discuss how the dental profession can build bridges for advancing peace, mutual understanding and improving the quality of life in areas torn by political conflict.

Therefore the organizers also invited Professor Vladi Ivanovitch, Vice-Dean of the Dental Faculty in Belgrade, to talk about the developing partnerships between the former Yugoslavian states, and Dr. Dorsef Toami from Tunisia, who presented the program for Dental Advancement in North African countries.

Professor Lois Cohen, formerly responsible for International Health at the NIDCR at the US National

Health Institute, moderated the session that aroused much interest and hope. It certainly added to the increasing belief that the dental profession can and should bridge political and economic gaps and contribute to the advancement of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace between nations.

The idea of setting up a joint framework to realize this vision received support from international figures such as Prof. Bruce Donoff, Dean of the Dental Faculty at Harvard University, Prof. Jerry Goldberg, Dean of Case Western in Ohio and Prof. Ferda Tasar, Former Dean of the Dental School at Hacettepe University, Ankara, who has participated in international symposiums in Antalya and Jerusalem under the aegis of the Middle East Center for Dental Education.

Two other figures very enthusiastic about the idea were Mr. Stanley Bergman, CEO of Henry Schein and his VP Mr. Steve Kess. Of course the support of Prof. D. Walter Cohen and others like Dr. Allen Finkelstein – who donated the Tree of Peace sculpture at the entrance to our Faculty – very much helped advance the project.

Another very influential figure adding his voice to the idea was Prof. Amid Ismail, Dean of the Dental Faculty at Temple University, Philadelphia.

Over the last two years, these leaders and others have had a number of meetings in New York, Boston and Philadelphia, during which they chose a name,



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Promoting Peace Through Oral Health

formulated working principles and drafted a charter to be signed by all participants. They also determined the organization's registration procedure in the State of New York as a body with the legal rights to raise funds for its activities.

During these preparatory meetings, the founding directors were elected – Prof. Amid Ismail (Chairperson), Prof. Adam Stabholz (Vice-Chairperson), Prof. Ferda Tasar (Secretary) and Mr. Steve Kess (Treasurer).

With all the bureaucracy completed, August 3, 2011 was chosen as the date for the founding convention of the Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders (AFOHAB).

Philadelphia was the location and Temple University together with the Henry Schein Company would be responsible for organization and logistics. It was decided that the Chair and Vice-Chair would prepare the event's content and agenda and the central attraction would be the signing of the Charter expressing the crux of the organization's activity.

The Charter was designed on a special scroll of parchment. A copy signed by all the founding members will be displayed in each of the dental schools, organizations and companies participating in the signing ceremony.

41 founding partners from 16 countries signed the scroll, including deans of dental schools or their representatives, directors of international dental organizations and CEOs of leading dental companies.

Apart from the Hebrew University-Hadassah Dental School and Al-Quds University – represented by Prof. Adam Stabholz and Prof. Musa Bajali respectively, another 23 deans or their representatives from the US, Canada, Japan, England, Italy, Russia, China, Australia, India, Bulgaria, Kuwait, Turkey and Tanzania signed the inaugural Charter. (See full list at the end of this article.)

It is interesting to note that in two of the founding partner schools – USC and Buffalo – the Deans are Profs. Avishai Sadan and Michael Glick, both alumni of our Jerusalem faculty.

At the moving and impressive signing ceremony, each representative was called by name to come up on stage and sign the Charter. Before the ceremony, the audience watched a presentation prepared by Profs. Adam Stabholz and Musa Bajali entitled, "Bridge to Peace." This described the story behind their mutual cooperation while highlighting the vision and the challenges along the way.

Mr. Stanley Bergman presented a short explanation of a cooperative model between the private sector and academia and Prof. Sari Nusseibeh, President of Al-Quds University – who was invited specially – was honored with the keynote lecture in which he spoke about bridges for peace.

Dr. Michael Tenenbaum, the International President of Alpha Omega, signed the Charter on behalf of Alpha Omega.

Prof. Anna Fuks – outgoing President of the International Association of Pediatric Dentistry – was also invited to participate in the discussions and contribute her experience in promoting international projects.

Prof. Ayala Stabholz, Director of the Alpha Omega Fraternity International Executive, was on her way to Montreal for an executive meeting but also joined the discussions to see how the Alpha Omega Fraternity could contribute to the new Alliance.

The afternoon was devoted to working meetings and participants were divided into six groups. They received identical assignments for creating operative content for implementing the principles outlined in the Charter.

The proposed Alliance will promote and facilitate collaborations among dental and health-related schools, companies, and other organizations worldwide to achieve the following common goals:

- o Promote peace through the promotion of oral health as part of total health and the elimination of disparities
- o Improve oral health by nurturing collaborations among health professionals in order to develop an understanding of the myriad social, political and other causes of conflicts
- o Develop leadership and advocacy programs to promote peace and wellbeing through oral health
- o Provide dental students and educators with opportunities for exchange throughout the world, ultimately familiarizing them with the state-of-the-art technology and science in all disciplines of dentistry throughout different part of the world
- o Promote and facilitate international collaborative research among members of the Alliance



Each group presented its conclusions at the end of the day.

The directors met the next day for a summary session and began the process of applying all the ideas.

It was an impressive, seminal event that brought much honor to our faculty and stressed its pivotal role in the international arena, presenting Dentistry as a unique medium for bridging political and other conflicts in the pursuit of peace.

I was invited to take part in this special event as the Chairperson of the D. Walter Cohen Middle East Center for Dental Education and I was proud to see

that our modest yet consistent activity (since 1997) was essentially the catalyst that led to the launch of this prestigious international project.

Peace initiatives have always been evident within the walls of our university but as Prof. Sarah Stroumsa said at a recent visit to the Faculty, "You don't only talk the talk. You walk the walk and you are a source of great pride and inspiration."

On a personal note, Anna and I said goodbye to many new friends from different countries who expressed their enthusiasm and will to be partners to this new path and promising vision of hope. Let it be!



Dental Schools Signing the Charter of The Alliance for Oral Health Across Borders August 3, 2011

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| 1 University of Sydney | 14 Hacettepe University in Ankara |
| 2 Medical University of Sofia in Bulgaria | 15 Dental Institute in King's College London |
| 3 University of Toronto | 16 A.T. Still University of Arizona |
| 4 Guangxi Medical University of China | 17 Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine, Cleveland |
| 5 Peking University School of Stomatology | 18 Drexel University College of Medicine, Philadelphia |
| 6 Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences in New-Delhi | 19 Forsyth Research Institute Boston |
| 7 Hebrew University-Hadassah, Jerusalem | 20 Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Boston |
| 8 Tel Aviv University | 21 Nova Southeastern University, Fort Lauderdale |
| 9 Sapienza University of Rome | 22 Temple University, Philadelphia |
| 10 Tokyo Dental College | 23 University at Buffalo School of Medicine |
| 11 Al-Quds University, East Jerusalem | 24 University of California, San Francisco |
| 12 Moscow State University for Medicine and Dentistry | 25 University of Southern California, Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry, Los Angeles |
| 13 Khon Kaen University of Thailand | |