

## 1960 – East Jerusalem

In 1882, the St John Ophthalmic Hospital opened on the Bethlehem Road, just South of Jerusalem. The people of Great Britain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, along with their Queen, Victoria, wished to vie with other European countries in having a charitable organisation in the Holy Land and so the Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was founded and, later, granted a Royal Charter by Her Majesty. The decision to have this charitable enterprise be an eye hospital was made because eye disease was then, as it is now, widespread in the area and far-reaching in its consequences.

The Hospital remained on the Bethlehem Road until it found itself separated from its patients when the boundaries of Israel were drawn in 1948. This meant a move to the Old City – where use was made of two houses owned by The Order and where a commemorative inscription can be read to this day – and thence to the present building on the slopes of Mount Scopus in East Jerusalem in 1960.

## 1980 – Outreach

In 1980, our Outreach programme was inaugurated to take primary health care out to the young and elderly in villages across the West Bank, who could not easily make the journey to Jerusalem. In the early days, before the opening of the Gaza Clinic, Outreach extended as far as the enclave, two hours away from the Jerusalem Hospital. After the Intifada in 1987, Gaza visits were made regularly on Saturdays and Sundays to perform surgery and to treat the injured there.

## 1992 – Gaza Clinic

For some time it had been clear that there was a need for the St John Eye Hospital to do more for the people of Gaza. The medical need is much greater there than elsewhere in the OPT as the scope of disease is especially terrible – particularly diabetes – and is exacerbated by the enormous refugee problem, continued conflict and civil unrest, and unsanitary housing conditions. It was, therefore, decided that a permanent facility should be established and, on 8 December 1992, our Gaza Clinic was formally opened. Surgery commenced in March 1993, and numbers have since continued to rise steadily. In 2009, despite the War at the beginning of the year, and the ongoing blockade, our doctors managed to treat 15,808 patients in Gaza.

## 1998 – Specialist Ophthalmic Nursing Course

The Specialist Ophthalmic Nursing Course was launched in January 1998. The Hospital had been training nurses since 1960 – its own and those seconded from other hospitals. By 1984, to keep pace with developments in nurse training, the Hospital launched a combined general and ophthalmic course for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN), but the trend for ever more academic-based training was set and by 1996 the LPN programme was terminated. By then, two Jerusalem Universities were offering Bachelor of Nursing degrees. However, the Eye Hospital was already in negotiation with Moorfields in London to develop a postgraduate course. The present Specialist Ophthalmic Nursing Course is unique in the region and, since 1998, has produced 93 graduate nurses, 43 of whom are currently working for the Hospital Group.

## 2001 - Joint Training Project with Hadassah Medical Centre

The Hadassah Medical Center is a world renowned Israeli organization that operates two University hospitals, as well as schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing, and

pharmacology. It is an affiliate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the first Board of Governors of which included Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud.

In 2001, the Peres Centre for Peace initiated an educational initiative between the Eye Hospital in East Jerusalem and the Department of Ophthalmology at Hadassah, funding a three year training programme for Palestinian Ophthalmologists. This allowed our Residents to become licensed in both Israel and Palestine and to gain training in cutting edge methods they could not otherwise have received. The Hospital Group began funding this project from its own resources in 2004.

In 2005, the Hadassah Center was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in acknowledgment of its equal treatment of all patients, regardless of ethnic and religious differences. We hope that – in some small way – our Teaching Programme with Hadassah helps bring Palestinian and Israeli together.

#### 2005 – Hebron

Located in the South, Hebron is the largest city in the West Bank. It had long been recognised by the Hospital as an area in dire need of ophthalmic care. Of the four registered ophthalmologists living in the Hebron Governorate, two already worked for the Hospital in Jerusalem. The Outreach team travelled weekly to the area. Since opening our Hebron centre, the number of patients being seen there has doubled and we have taken over a second floor of the Dahyiet El Zaitoun Hospital building. In 2008, Chairman John Talbot upgraded the Clinic's status to that of a Hospital in its own right. Last year, we treated 14,364 patients in Hebron and were able to perform close to 700 sight-saving operations.

#### 2007 – Anabta

Responding to the movement restrictions enforced upon our patients, St John Eye Hospital Group opened a third satellite centre in Anabta in the Spring of 2007. The Anabta clinic caters for close to a million residents in the isolated North of the West Bank and – along with Hebron – allows us to reach almost all of the West Bank towns, villages and refugee camps. In 2009, we treated 11,289 patients at Anabta.

...which brings us right up to the present and our plans to expand the Retinal Unit at Jerusalem. The last 50 years have seen the original concept of an eye hospital in the Holy Land mature into a major ophthalmic and development enterprise.