



The D. Walter Cohen, DDS,
Middle East Center for Dental Education

IN THE BEGINNING

In the letter that Albert Einstein sent in 1950 to the president of the Alpha Omega Fraternity, he said: "Not only Israel but the entire Middle East will profit from the creation of a school that will make available to the entire area dentists and scientific technique". The "D. Walter Cohen Center for Middle East Education" was officially dedicated on June 1st 1997 and since then has worked towards establishing joint ventures with dentists from Israel and its neighbors.

At the opening of the "D. Walter Cohen Center for Middle East Education" D. Walter Cohen addressed the audience and said. "This is a great moment in the 44 year history of our beloved Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine founded by the Alpha Omega Fraternity...Today, an unbelievable dream has come true with the opening of this Center which is dedicated to

"Bridging the Peace"...the first symposium of this Center was held two days ago with representatives from more than a dozen countries present, including Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel and we have begun to work in a collaborative manner to help address the dental needs of the people in the Middle East countries and they, hopefully, enhance the peace process...When the Einstein letter was read I recalled this story: In 1952 Albert Einstein was a guest of honor at a lunch of the American Friends of The Hebrew University. During the ceremonies a member pledged a gift to the University and said that if Einstein would shake hands with his wife, he would double the gift. Einstein got up so fast that he dropped his glasses. Well I am willing to have my glasses fall."

*Not only Israel but the entire Middle east
will profit from the creation of a school
that will make available to the entire area
dentists and scientific technique in the
care of the teeth.*

A. Einstein.
Albert Einstein

September 3, 1950

The Bridge to Peace Conference– May 30 - June 1, 1997

On May 30th, about 1,000 dentists from 13 countries convened in an international conference entitled “The Bridge to Peace.” The conference’s scientific program included a symposium - “Dental Care and Dental Education: Advances in the Middle East Based on World Experience”. Twenty eight participants were personally invited to attend and they included representatives from: the USA, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Turkey, UK, France, Romania, Japan and Israel.

D. Walter Cohen opened the proceedings, voicing his faith that the symposium would emphasize the role of dental education together with dental research, as part of the new Center’s goal, as “A Bridge to Peace”.

Dean Adam Stabholz welcomed the panel and hoped that close cooperation in the fields of dentistry, dental education, dental research, exchange of teachers and students, would benefit all peoples of the Middle East. The representatives from the participating neighboring countries presented their regions’ needs.

The chief dental officer of the Palestinian Authority was proud to represent his people and expressed his faith that “We are the physicians, who know that the blood in our veins is the same. We are the ones who can keep people healthy and safe. We are the messengers who can keep love and peace among the peoples”.



International Advisory Committee

At the first meeting of the Center in June 1997 Dr. Walter Cohen said: "I believe that the discussion has been very fruitful. Excellent suggestions were made. Efforts to advance the Center were well received. I think that one of the primary goals is to address the oral health problems of the Middle East countries through education and research." In order to promote continued activity of the Center, he proposed the following international advisory committee:

Representatives from: Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey, The Hebrew University, Hadassah Medical Organization, The Alpha Omega Fraternity, NIDCR, WHO, IADR, the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department of International Collaboration and the Israel Ministry of Health.

In November 1997, the International Advisory Committee of the D. Walter Cohen Middle East Center for Dental Education, convened in Jerusalem and the following goals of the Center were defined and accepted:

- To serve as a center for dental education that will promote cooperation in the field of Dental Medicine between the countries in the Middle East.
- To develop local programs in Oral Health for the benefit of the peoples of the area.
- To provide dentists of the area with state-of-the art knowledge and skills in all disciplines of modern dentistry.
- To encourage joint research between Israeli scientists and their colleagues from the neighboring countries while looking for funds from international organizations to support their research.
- To help in the consolidation of a true peace between Israel and its neighbors.

To date, the International Advisory Committee has met almost every year.



The D. Walter Cohen Lectures

Among the activities of the D. Walter Cohen Middle East Center for Dental Education is the well known D. Walter Cohen Lecture which is open free of charge to all dentists in the Middle East and attracts many participants.

A world renowned speaker is invited to present this lecture in the campus of the Hebrew University-Hadassah or the Al-Quds University.

First Lecture: December, 1998

Dr. Eithan Galun, Director Goldyne Savad Institute of Gene Therapy, Hadassah
Gene therapy, naked, wrapped & targeted from past to future

Second Lecture: September, 2000

Dr. Tony Volpe – Colgate Palmolive
Recent advances in dentifrice technology

Third Lecture: September, 2003

Dr. Danny Nathanson- Boston University
Color matching in dentistry – how much closer have we come?

Fourth Lecture: March, 2006

Mr. Stanley Bergman – CEO Henry Schein Inc.
The relationships between industry and the academic community



Mr. S. Bergman presents the 4th D. Walter Cohen Lecture

Continued Programs of the Center

To date the Center has hosted about 50 dentists from the Palestinian Authority, Jordan, Turkey, Cyprus, Morocco and Egypt. We have included one day seminars, annual lectures, 2-4 week courses, PhD and post-graduate specialization tracks, and joint research activities. In June, 2007, a joint one day of studies was organized at the Ein Kerem, Hadassah campus for final year students of the two faculties. We also have initiated a 2-year training program at the Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine called "To Train the Trainers." Staff at the Al-Quds University were selected by their dean to be professionally trained as future leaders of their university teaching staff in the departments of prosthodontics, endodontics, oral medicine, pediatric dentistry, and maxillofacial prosthetics.



Launching the Al Quds University – Hebrew University Agreement

On March 21, 2006, after carefully developing a mutual relationship of trust and understanding between Al-Quds University and the Hebrew University and Hadassah, a program of collaboration between the dental schools was launched. Officials from both universities – as well as other distinguished guests – were present at this historic event. Following introductory speeches and greetings by the hosts, the annual speaker of the event, Mr. Stanley Bergman, chairman and chief executive officer of Henry Schein, Inc. presented his interesting lecture.

It has been said that peace might come by the goodwill of our professional leaders. The sight of Israeli and Palestinian students sitting together during lunch engaging in dialogue on common interests, exchanging ideas and expressing their will to study and work together was probably the greatest achievement of that day.



Prof. M. Magidor, President Hebrew University, Prof. D. Walter Cohen, Prof. S. Nusseibeh, President Al-Quds University (L to R)

The First Middle East Symposium in Dental Medicine

The fast-growing relationship between the two dental schools led to an historic event: the First Middle East Symposium in Dental Medicine. This symposium was held in East Jerusalem on November 27, 2006. The interaction was the result of the growing trust and friendship between the deans, staff, and the students of the Al-Quds and the Hebrew-University-Hadassah dental schools. Nobel Biocare AB (Goteborg, Sweden), was the Platinum Sponsor of this symposium and the main topic was: "The Use of Dental Implants in Comprehensive Dental Treatment." The moderators were Prof. Bruce Donoff, Dean of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, and Prof. Jerold Goldberg, Dean of the School of Dental Medicine at Case Western Reserve University. Well-known speakers from the United States, France, and Turkey joined our colleagues Prof. Nitzan Bichacho of Hadassah, and Dr. Abdulgani Azaldeen of Al-Quds to produce an outstanding scientific program.

Dr. D. Walter Cohen was the honorary chairman of the symposium. Former dean and longtime friend Prof. Ferda Tasar, represented Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey. The presidents of Hebrew University, Hadassah and Al-Quds University addressed the audience at the opening ceremony, expressing their wishes for a strong collaboration between the dental schools and other branches of both universities. Professor Adam Stabholz, Dean of the Hebrew University-Hadassah Dental School stated that "We can build bridges at the level of professions and live in peace as human beings. We must be a model for others." Professor Mussa Bajali, Dean of the Al Quds Dental School, reiterated that "As dentists, we know that occasionally a bridge may fail due to a diseased abutment. The decayed abutments of the previous bridges will be replaced by the implants we shall place, guided in their placement by our belief in the ability to work together."



The Second Middle East Symposium in Dental Medicine

In September 2007 a joint group from Al Quds and the Hebrew Universities traveled to Antalya, Turkey, where a three day meeting took place together with colleagues from two Turkish universities.

This symposium was organized as a joint project by Israeli, Palestinian and Turkish Dental Schools: The Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine Founded by the Alpha Omega Dental Fraternity, The Al-Quds University Faculty of Dentistry and the Hacettepe University Faculty of Dentistry in Ankara. Collaborating in the organization of this special event were also; Gazi University in Ankara, Istanbul University, Harvard University, Case Western University, University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University. The symposium's topic was "Clinical and Aesthetic Aspects in Comprehensive Dental Care". The scientific program included workshops given by invited keynote speakers, presentations by speakers who represented the participating dental schools as well as case presentations by students from the participating dental schools.



Research

Several scientific endeavors have been adopted, combining joint Israeli and Palestinian researchers. A study entitled: "Oral Health Status of Palestinian Schoolchildren in the West Bank - Preliminary Data", was conducted jointly by Al-Quds University and Hebrew University-Hadassah researchers. This was published in the Middle East Journal of Oral Health. The abstract reads: "Chronic diseases are currently overtaking communicable diseases as the leading health problem in the world. This trend has been found to be strongly associated with changing lifestyles among populations. Health behavior has a significant impact on oral health, which has emerged as a major public health problem in most regions of the world. Dental hygiene, oral bacteria, salivary properties, fluoride applications, dietary patterns, culture, and environmental factors are well-known variables that have been shown to

play key roles in the progression of dental caries and periodontal diseases. The objectives of this pilot study were to examine the prevalence of dental caries among Palestinian schoolchildren and the fluoride water content in one West Bank area. The aim was to formulate a pathway for future research and treatment." A research grant was obtained and the study is currently been continued. Another joint study, concerning dental trauma of West Bank Palestinian children has been conducted.

