



# *Palestine/Israel Health Initiative*

## PIHI

**"Advancing Trust and  
Reconciliation Among  
Palestinians and Israelis"**

**A Center for the Study of the Presidency Project**

# Palestine/Israel Health Initiative (PIHI) Overview

## Purpose:

- Identify organizations and individuals engaged in joint Palestinian/Israeli health activities
- Foster dialogue and cooperation and enhance networking between health and medical professionals in Israel and Palestine
- Highlight priority areas where cooperative activities between Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. professionals can effectively improve health in the region
- Create sustainability for the programs of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative

## Achievements:

- Identified ongoing health projects in the region and built a cooperative network of Palestinian and Israeli health experts
- Convened working group meetings with Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. health and medical experts to focus on priority areas for improving health in the region
- Developed a selected inventory of cooperative activities between Palestinians and Israelis in health and medicine in the region
- Produced a report with an analysis of Palestinian and Israeli health systems, cooperative health activities and recommendations for improving health in the area
- Created a “Health e-Commons” internet workspace for sustaining health cooperation and networking between Palestinian and Israeli medical and scientific professionals
- Initiated the first public multilingual internet portal for health information in this region of the Middle East with resources in Arabic, Hebrew, and English ([www.HealthMiddleEast.org](http://www.HealthMiddleEast.org))

## Next Steps:

- Enhancing and promoting cooperation among Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. health experts on health initiatives
- Expanding selected inventory of ongoing cooperative activities
- Expanding the content and reach of the health information web portal ([www.HealthMiddleEast.org](http://www.HealthMiddleEast.org)) and increasing utilization of “Health e-Commons”
- Implementing selected recommendations from the PIHI project
- Identifying additional resources for supporting cooperative health projects in the region



# The Palestine/Israel Health Initiative

*Health is essential to the economy, well-being, national security, and future of the Middle East region. The Palestine/Israel Health Initiative (PIHI) is a central component of the Center for the Study of the Presidency's program "Advancing Trust and Reconciliation in Israel and Palestine," supported by the U.S. Agency on International Development (USAID).*

*The health and medicine component of this USAID-sponsored initiative focuses on using health as a bridge to further knowledge, cooperation, trust, and understanding between Israelis and*

*Palestinians. Countries cannot achieve political stability or flourish economically with unhealthy people. Health is a common currency in this region of the world to help achieve a better future — reducing inequalities that lead to mistrust and building the relationships between people that can serve as pillars for peaceful co-existence.*



Dr. Blumenthal with Emergency Room staff at the Medical Simulation Center of Hadassah Medical Center, a pioneering organization in cooperative training and patient care initiatives.



Dr. Blumenthal, Stephanie Safdi, and PIHI participants meeting with staff at Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, where joint training and patient care programs with Hadassah Medical Center in Israel are underway.

## About the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative

The health and medical fields represent unique opportunities for building bridges between societies. Whether through preventive interventions, health services, or research, the quest to improve health facilitates cooperation between providers, scientists, and patients from across the region. Health care professionals in Palestine and Israel who work together do not simply deliver care and prevent illness. They have taken on a role as health diplomats, building bridges between these two societies, creating venues for cooperation, and laying the seeds for a peaceful future in the region.

Over the past decades, providing treatment and care for patients in need as well as preventing diseases and epidemics of common concern to the region has necessitated cooperation in the health field between Palestinian and Israeli scientists, clinicians, and public health practitioners. Despite challenges, a significant group of individuals and organizations from both sides of the border remain committed to continuing to work together. Their cooperation serves as a vehicle for strengthening health systems, improving the health status of people in the region, and creating the professional and personal relationships that build trust and create peaceful bonds between societies.

The goal of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative has been to foster collaboration and facilitate interaction between health and medical experts in Palestine and Israel to improve the health of people in the region as well as to promote increased cooperation and understanding. As a first stage, the Initiative convened a series of meetings and working group sessions during the winter and spring of 2008 which brought together Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. health experts to discuss areas of common concern and priorities in the region. It produced a set of recommendations on strengthening health systems in the area through cooperative activities and a selected inventory of ongoing projects. The Initiative has also taken important steps to harness the Internet and new media for advancing health and understanding in the region through the creation of two unique websites — one for networking and information exchange among health care professionals and the other for health information for the public in this region with resources in English, Arabic and Hebrew.

It is hoped that by promoting cooperative activities in health and medicine, the products of the CSP Palestine/Israel Health Initiative will contribute to the continuing process of building trust and reconciliation, paving the way toward a more peaceful future in the region. We invite you to become involved in this important initiative by reading about our activities in this brochure and contributing to the expansion of its “Peace through Health” programs. Please contact us for a copy of the project’s report and selected inventory, *Peace through Health: A Mapping of Cooperative Programs in Palestine and Israel*.



Dr. Susan Blumenthal, Stephanie Safdi, Beth Hoffman, and PIHI Working Group participants meeting with Prof. Shlomo Mor-Yosef, Director General of the Hadassah Medical Center, where *Peace through Health* activities in the region were discussed.

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*“The acronym ART (Appreciation, Respect and Trust) is a pre-requisite to any collaboration among partners living in conflict areas.”*

Ziad Abdeen, PhD, MPH,  
Associate Professor of Public  
Health, Al-Quds University  
Medical School

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# Activities and Outcomes

## Working Group Meetings

Through meetings convened in Israel and Palestine during the winter and spring of 2008, five areas of critical importance for health and medicine cooperative activities were identified:

- Primary Care and Prevention
- Education and Training
- Emergency Medicine and Disaster Preparedness
- Health Information Technology
- Health and Medical Research



Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. health experts in PIHI Working Group meetings in East Jerusalem.

Meetings culminated in two days of Working Group sessions in East Jerusalem on April 29 and 30th, 2008. The two-day exchange included approximately 50 participants from Israel, Palestine, and the United States, representing the Ministries of Health, academia, hospitals, insurance companies, non-governmental organization (NGOs), the World Health Organization, (WHO), USAID and the U.S. Department of State. Working Group meetings fostered relationships between Palestinian and Israeli health and medical experts while producing recommendations for cooperative activities to improve health in the region. Selected recommendations are featured in the published report of the CSP Palestine/Israel Health Initiative (PIHI).

## Selected Inventory of Cooperative Activities

In recent years, few studies have been conducted to identify cooperative health initiatives between Palestinian and Israeli experts and organizations. This has impeded investment and growth of these activities as well as networking between those involved. The CSP Palestine/Israel Health Initiative consequently carried out a mapping of ongoing cooperative activities between Israeli and Palestinian scientists and health care professionals from 2005 to the present. The creation of this Selected Inventory has revealed over forty programs and thousands of individuals committed to working together across borders to advance the health of people in the region.

This selected mapping is intended as a guide to promising programs for health care professionals and donors, as well as for governmental and nongovernmental organization involvement. It illustrates the importance and necessity of the work that these programs accomplish. The Selected Inventory provides an important lens into the inspiring daily interactions that occur, often below the radar, between people who believe that the need to heal transcends politics and the need to advance health knows no borders.



Dr. Susan Blumenthal with Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. health experts Dr. Hasan Dweik, Dr. Dov Tamir, Dr. Ziad Abdeen, and Dr. Hani Abujudeh.

*“Thank you for your leadership and inspiration in helping to build a...humane positive relationship in the Middle East region”*

Dov Tamir, MD,  
Director of Health Promotion Unit  
Ben Gurion University, Israel

# Report and Recommendations

Despite current tensions in the region, considerable support exists among Israeli and Palestinian health professionals for sustaining and strengthening cooperation as circumstances permit. Furthermore, health system development is an area where outside parties, including governments, NGOs, foundations, and the private sector, can play a constructive role in facilitating projects between Palestinian and Israeli health and medical experts.

To facilitate the dissemination of knowledge about cooperative health and medical activities underway in the region, the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative has published a report *Peace through Health: A Mapping of Cooperative Health Programs in Palestine and Israel*. This report can be found on [www.ThePresidency.org](http://www.ThePresidency.org) and includes the following components:

- Background on Israeli and Palestinian Health Systems
- History of cooperation in health and medicine between Israel and Palestine
- Selected Recommendations from the Initiative
- Inventory of Cooperative Health Programs between Israel and Palestine
- Applications of Information Technology to Improve Health

# Health e-Commons

A key contribution of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative has been applying the tools of new media and the Internet in innovative ways to advance health in the region. To promote interaction and knowledge exchange, the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative launched a “Health e-Commons” website that serves as an online workspace at <http://pihi.projectsaces.com>. This workspace provides a password-protected forum for Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. health and medical experts to collaborate and share best practices and health information through the Internet. The “Health e-Commons” fosters professional networking and the discussion and development of cooperative health activities in the region.



# www.HealthMiddleEast.org

As an innovative effort to apply new technologies to advance public health, this Initiative is developing the first public Internet portal for health information and clinical best practices in the region, with resources in Arabic, Hebrew, and English. For use by the general public and health professionals, the website serves as a gateway to a wealth of information on diseases and medical conditions of common concern and provides helpful resources to prevent illness as well. The portal will highlight cooperative health programs in

the region and activities between Palestinians and Israelis. It will serve as a useful tool to increase knowledge and awareness of health issues in this area of the world.



## Next Steps: Peace Through Health

It is hoped that by promoting cooperative activities in health and medicine, the products of the CSP Palestine/Israel Health Initiative will make meaningful contributions to the continuing process of building trust and reconciliation, paving the way toward a more peaceful future in the region. Cooperative activities between Palestinian and Israeli medical professionals are instrumental both to improving health and serving the broader function of fostering peace in this area of the world. Health care professionals in these societies have taken on a new role in addition to their traditional duties of curing and preventing illness. This role of **“peace promotion through health”** is a vital function that physicians and other health care providers can play when working in areas of conflict.

### The Path Forward

Next stages of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative will focus on expanding the community of Palestinian and Israeli health professionals dedicated to working together to advance health and peace in the region as well as targeting specific objectives for improving health through cooperative activities.

With future support, next stages of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative will include:

- Convening Conferences, Briefings, and Meetings
- Building Partnerships to Advance Health in the Region
- Implementation of Selected PIHI Recommendations
- Expansion of Cooperative Projects and Selected Inventory
- Application of Information Technology to Improve Health

Health can be a common ground for cooperation in areas of conflict. A critical insight of the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative has been that innovative strategies and tools such as information technology and new media can immunize cooperative work from geopolitical divides. Online spaces such as the PIHI “Health e-Commons” web networking site and the multilingual public health information portal, [www.HealthMiddleEast.org](http://www.HealthMiddleEast.org), serve as powerful vehicles to enhance cooperative activities in health and medicine globally, and specifically between Palestinians and Israelis. Health information technology facilitates dialogue, communication, and networking and can aid in health service delivery and the implementation of strategic initiatives to improve health.

The common quest for good health knows no borders. Crossing societies, politics and cultures, the cooperative activities supported by the Palestine/Israel Health Initiative and identified by this project help foster increasing interdependence, interconnections and shared humanity through the advancement of health.



*“Just as diplomats have hammered out treaties over the centuries to build bridges between nations, public health and medical experts have begun sharing best practices and technology in an effort to build a new kind of bridge between countries to foster peace and development in this region of the world.”*

Susan Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.A.  
Director, Health and Medicine Program,  
Center for the Study of the Presidency  
Former Assistant Surgeon General  
of the United States

*“Our most basic common link is that we all inhabit the same planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future.”*

President John F. Kennedy



# *Palestine/Israel Health Initiative*

## **Project Organization**

- **Susan Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.A.**, PIHI Director  
*Director, Health and Medicine Program, Center for the Study of the Presidency;  
Former U.S. Assistant Surgeon General, and Deputy Secretary for Health in  
the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*
- **Stephanie Safdi, M.Phil.**, PIHI Project Manager  
*Research Assistant, Center for the Study of the Presidency*
- **Michael Silbermann, D.M.D., Ph.D.**, PIHI Field Director  
*Executive Director, Middle East Cancer Consortium*
- **Ziad Abdeen, Ph.D.**  
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Founded in 1965, the non-profit, non-partisan Center for the Study of the Presidency serves as the institutional memory of that high office, and applies the lessons of history to the challenges faced by the President and Congress. The Center is directed by David M. Abshire, Ph.D.



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