

10-Italian Medical Delegation visits Duhok to Cure Congenital Heart Diseases children, from 17th Mar., till 24 Mar., 2012

With an invitation from Heevie Org. and the support of KRG Government Prime Minister His Excellency Nechirvan Barzani, in cooperation with the Italian Organizations (SIA & Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo A.I.C.I. ONLUS), Directorate General of Health / Duhok , and in coordination with Italian Consulate in Erbil an Italian medical team from San Donato Hospital - Milan arrived Duhok to conduct operations for the first time in Azadi Heart Center -Duhok for a group of Congenital Heart Disease children and contribute to promote health sector through training local medical staff and Doctors in Italy and on the job in Kurdistan for the period 17-24 March 2012.

Worth to mention that all the visiting Italian medical delegations since 2006 are volunteers and provide free health care and treatment services to the local patients who are receiving such services in both Kurdistan and Italy. The Italian team consisted of (24) Italian medical staff and Doctors. The plan was to treat about (22) patient children affiliated with Congenital Heart diseases, and examine groups of new patients. Those children have been chosen by Italian doctors previously among the statistics that collected since 2005 by Heevie Organization from all governorates. This large number of patients had been examined by the Italian team and local doctors who were trained in Italy.

Heevie invests the cooperation among all parties to better benefit, the patient children and health system in the region through creating connections among local physicians and Italian ones, who are transferring expertise and modern techniques in fields of pediatric treatment, work plans and follow-ups. The statistics of the Congenital Heart Diseases Patients collected by Heevie since 2005 up to date show the enormous number of children affiliated with congenital heart diseases. The process of collecting such data although was really hard and difficult but yet very necessary as it rushes all the related and interested parties to find a mechanism to overcome the difficulty of providing treatment for such patients. Heevie use the below shown statistic data in its efforts to draw the attention of both Italian volunteers medical teams and local authorities to joint efforts and set up a potential plan and program to be implemented that enables local health authorities depend on the local abilities to provide cure and treatment to the patient children in coordination with Italian professionals and expertise. The table makes it clear that Kurdistan Region holds the largest number of the patients; this is why Kurdistan Region Health Authorities may prioritize hosting Italian medical teams to conduct both training and treatment.

Activities of the Team:

1-Meeting in Directorate General of Health in Duhok / 11.3.2012



Miss Bakhshan Ali, Manager of Heevie, participated in a preparatory meeting with Dr. Nezar Esmat, Director General of Health in Duhok, in the directorate building along with all the personnel who are participating in the arrangements to receive the Italian medical team. Miss Bakhshan Ali retailed the proposed program of the medical team and the requirements that make the mission goes smoothly and efficiently. Dr. Nezar Esmat presented the preparations made to receive the team and the preparations of the Heart Diseases Center to conduct the proposed number of surgeries and interventions.

2-Sunday March 18th Press Conference





Press Conference

Heevie in cooperation and coordination with Directorate General of Health in Duhok, held a press conference on 18th of March in the conference hall of Duhok Directorate of Health for all the parties who had taken the initiative since 2006 and up to date offering urgent medical assistance and help for children and participate in developing and modernizing health system in the region. Invitations had been sent out to all local and satellite media outlets to cover the event and broadcast the taken initiatives to the inhabitants of Kurdistan Region who are very interested in the types of services and assistance. Many local NGOs in Duhok were present, motivated by the great efforts spent by Italian teams and Heevie. Heevie started the conference welcoming all the participants and illustrated history of the coordination among all the parties since 2006 precisely.

Heevie introduced the participants in the press conference panel started with his Excellency Dr. Simone De Santi Italian Consular in Erbil, Dr. Nezar Esmat, Director General of Health in Duhok, Dr. Ilja Gardi, International Health Planner and Iraq & Kurdistan Region Health representative in Italy, Prof. Alessandro Frigiola, Cardiac Surgeon and head of the Medical delegation from San Donato Hospital in Milan and Dr. Iole Pinto, President of Solidarity Initiatives association. Dr. Simone de Santi, the Italian Consular in Erbil, as representative of Italian Government and people had given a speech to all the participants in which he praised the type of cooperation and coordination among all the parties even before the official presence of Italian Government in Kurdistan Region, the humanitarian missions that started in 2006. Dr. De Sante passed his thanks to Dr. Ilja Gardi, Miss Bakhshan Ali, Dr. Nezar Esmat, Dr. Iole Pinto and Prof. Alessandro Frigiola and health authorities in Duhok Governorate, at the same time he conveyed the greeting of the Italian Ambassador to all the participants. Dr. Simone illustrated the readiness of Italian Consulate offering all required support and assistance to keep such coordination move forward, and again he thanked all the participants of the project and regarded it as something very valuable.

Dr. Nezar Esmat, Director General of Health in Duhok and Duhok Governor Representative, started his speech thanking all participants and dedicated special thanks to Heevie, the Italian NGOs and Italian Government for the support they are offering to develop the health system, treating patient children, training local health personnel. Dr. Nezar Esmat expressed people of Duhok high appreciation of the efforts of Heevie and all the Italian NGOs for providing the humanitarian and free services curing patient children. Dr. Nezar Esmat asked for the continuation of such coordination, help and support. He added that he is all hope to make Azadi Heart Diseases Center modal of treating patient children in Kurdistan and Iraq.



Press Conference

Dr. Ilja Gardi, International Health Planner, Member of the board of Directors Manatena Italy Onlus, Iraq and Kurdistan Region Health Representative in Italy, started his speech thanking all the participants, His Excellency Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, and dedicated special thanks to Miss Bakhshan Ali, Heevie Manager and said without the efforts of Miss Bakhshan what's going on today would not be possible and Directorate General of Health.

Dr. Ilja Gardi stated that we are in the middle of the river and we have to bowl to get to shore meaning that we have started first with treating patient children as pilot project as an urgent response to the critical health situation of patient children, added that according to the statistics collected by Heevie more than 6,000 children in Kurdistan Region are affiliated with congenital heart diseases and the number is in increase as new born are added.

Dr. Ilja Gardi stated that Italian NGOs in coordination with Italian Government were able to treat big numbers of such children and diagnose large numbers of them, training some of local doctors to conduct operations and diagnose patients, but for now and the next step is to make Kurdistan Region as self efficient in the field of treating such children and convert Kurdistan Region from a place that needs assistance to place that provides assistance and health consultation.

Prof. Alessandro Frigiola, Heart Surgeon, Chief of the Cardiac Surgery in San Donato Hospital-Milan, founder of Heart Diseases Children NGO, thanked all the participants and illustrated that he had been in Kurdistan since 2006 and had made many visits to this region. Prof. Alessandro Frigiola stated that the number of the Children affiliated with congenital heart diseases in Kurdistan Region is higher than other countries and this may go back to many reasons.



Press Conference

Dr. Alessandro stated that 18th of March of 2012 is a special day for Duhok Governorate because in that day for the first time in Kurdistan Region history an open heart surgery will be conducted in Azadi Heart Diseases center which will be considered as milestone for future development in such a field. Prof. Alessandro agreed to what Dr. Gardi stated that we should continue offering help and assistance to the local community till self efficiency is in place.

Dr. Iole Pinto, President of Solidarity Initiatives Association expressed her thanks to all the attendants and illustrated her first visit to Kurdistan Region in 1998 with Miss Bakhshan Ali and their first initiative of consolidation for Kurdistan children. Dr. Iole thanked Miss Bakhshan for the huge efforts she paid and still paying to help Kurdistan patient children.

She flashed back the first group of children sent to Italy for treatment and how difficult this mission was, as most of the Italian people considered Kurdistan as a very dangerous place, but with the efforts of all the parties and individuals it has become clear that Kurdistan Region really is in need to such kind of help.

Dr. Iole Pinto hoped to come to Kurdistan in the next few years as tourist when Kurdistan Region is self sufficient in treating congenital Heart Disease patient children, at the end she thanked Mr. Nechirvan Barzani for the support he contributed with, Miss Bakhshan, Dr. Ilja Gardi, Prof. Alessandro and Directorate General of Health in Duhok.

Many of Local media from Newspapers and Televisions was present to cover the conference, such as (Kurd sat, NRT, Duhok TV, GK, PUK, Spede TV, and Kurdistan KTV) and others. After the end of the speech of the panel, some of the media outlets raised some questions to the panel and were answered by Dr. Nezar Esmat, Miss Bakhshan, and Dr. Ilja Gardi. Media Outlets made individual interviews with Heevie member and taken photos with and for the Italian Consular in Erbil.



Once the Italian medical team arrived Duhok city, according to the plan they have split the team to several groups, each assigned a specific duty. This is to ease and facilitate the conduction of the target goal that is examining, evaluating and conducting operations. At the same time and as per the arrangement previously made between Heevie and Directorate of Health in coordination and match with Italian team plan, groups of local doctors were prepared to accompany each Italian group. The Italian team led by Prof. Fregiola aims to create a local team that can conduct cath and open heart surgeries in the future. Local physicians participated in the operations and cath interventions to be trained and the same time to be evaluated as potential candidates to study and be trained in Italy.

The Italian mission of this time is preparing foundation of enabling local health capacities to be self sufficient and provide treatment to patient children in Kurdistan locally and depending on local abilities. Prof. Fregiola is proposing a plan that can be conducted within 3-5 years in which many of local doctors will receive training from Italian expertise as well as the medical staff who are assisting in the conduction of cath and open heart surgeries. Eventually full teams will be prepared that will enable Kurdistan Region to take care of its congenital heart diseases children.

3-Examination and evaluation team

The examination and evaluation team, mainly targeted patients with congenital heart diseases. Examinations made to the patient children to find out about the type of the diseases they are affiliated with, then and evaluation was made for the possibility of conducting Catheterization or open-heart surgeries and some patients will be selected to be treated in Italy. The main aim of the team is to prepare next group of patient children to be operated when the next mission is prepared to conduct operations. In this visit (366) patient children are examined and evaluated.



Examination and evaluation patients



Examination and evaluation patients



Examination and evaluation patients

4-Catheterization Intervention Team

The second team was Catheterization intervention one, which had taken care of conducting Catheterization interventions to the patient children affiliated with heart diseases that can be treated through Catheterization. The previous Italian missions that had made examination and evaluations to the health conditions of the patients, selected from the statistics collected by Heevie, enabled his team to start interventions right away. The communications that Heevie had made with the parents and families of the patients and the preparations that DG of Health had done, enabled this team to conduct (11) Catheterization interventions , (4) Diagnostics in Azadi Heart Diseases Center in Duhok and (14) Local medical Staff trained on the job by the Italian Medical Teams.



The Team of Catheterization





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5-Open Heart Surgery Team

The team of the open heart surgeries for the first time in Iraq conducted surgery for Transposition of the Great Arteries for an infant patient and for the first time an open heart surgery was conducted in Duhok. This milestone may enable local capacities to conduct such operations in the future. Supervised by Prof. Alessandro Fregiola the Italian team accompanied by local doctors conducted the open heart surgery, this is why as Prof. Fregiola said the 18th of March is a happy day in the health history of Duhok city, and because of the volunteer and humanitarian intent of the Italian teams, the nonstop and efforts Heevie is paying, support of his Excellency Nechirvan Barzani, Directorate General of Health, Duhok Governorate is recorded as the first one conducting such a very complicate operation in Iraq. The open heart surgeries conducted (7) operations in Azadi Heart Diseases Center and (36) Local medical Staff trained on the job by the Italian Medical Teams.



The Team of Open Heart Surgery



The Team of Open Heart Surgery



The Team of Open Heart Surgery

6-Italian Delegation and Medical team, Heevie, Director General of Health in Duhok Celebrate Nawroz with Mr. Tamar Ramadhan Duhok Governor



On the evening of 20th of March all the Italian medical team and delegations participated in celebrating Nawroz with Mr. Tamar Ramadhan Duhok Governor in Duhok city. Mr. Governor and Prof. Alessandro Frigiola lit the fire of Nawroz together holding the fire torch. The participation to lit Nawroz fire and celebrate with Kurdish population the occasion of Kurdish New Year express the strong ties and relations that connect people and authorities in Duhok with Italians, and this goes back and credited from the efforts paid by the volunteer and humanitarian efforts that Italian parties spent to treat patient children in Kurdistan.



Mr. Tamar Ramadhan Duhok Governor with the Italian Team lit the fire of Nawroz 2012



Mr. Tamar Ramadhan Duhok Governor with the Italian Team in Nawroz 2012

Mr. Tamar Ramadhan expressed his thanks to the efforts that Italian and Heevie are paying to treat Kurdistan patient children and helping the health authorities specifically in Duhok Governorate to develop the system. At the same time he expressed his happiness to have Italians as friends and partners participating in Nawroz eve celebrations.

Duhok Governor invited the whole Italian team and Miss Bakhshan to dinner; during dinner all the parties discussed the difficulties that face health system in Kurdistan generally and in Duhok governorate specifically. Mr. Tamar expressed readiness of Duhok governorate to contribute in such missions through providing necessary support.



Mr. Tamar Ramadhan Duhok Governor with the Italian Team in Nawroz 2012

7-Two Italian Media Teams from European Heart for Children Association & Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo Association accompanied the Medical Team during the visit



Heevie adapted the task of collecting complete statistics about all the type of diseases that children in Kurdistan Region are facing but specifically the congenital heart diseases ones due to the large number of congenital heart diseases patient children that exist in Kurdistan Region, Heevie is using such data as a mean of attracting more foundations and institutes to step in offering help and support to provide treatment to such patients.

During this visit a media team from European Heart for Children Association, Ms. Claudia Florio, Mr. Michele Piacciaredda, Mr. Mario Canale accompanied the Italian medical team to record a documentary movie about the patient children in Kurdistan Region and the lack of the appropriate infrastructure that enables the local authorities to handle and deal with such type of diseases. The media team concentrated on the massive efforts that are spent by Heevie for Children, represented by Miss Bakhshan Ali, and the Italian NGOs and Individuals to provide treatment for these patient children and provide training that can prepare for appropriate local capacities to handle and treat patient children.

The Documentary movie is a magnitude event for all the parties especially for Kurdistan Region children and health authorities as it may attract and draw the attention of more volunteers doctors in Italy to participate in offering help and support to provide both training that may lay down a platform for self efficiency in such field and provide urgent treatment to affiliated children with congenital heart diseases.

The team and during the documentary will raise the curtain on the suffers of the patient children and their parents, the inability to find suitable and professional expertise to provide treatment such as specialized hospitals and the inability of affording the expenses of travelling abroad seeking for treatment, eventually the children and their parents were waiting the time were death harvest their beautiful souls and plant grief in their lives.

On the other hand, the team is presenting the bright side of missions and efforts paid by all parties and participants, bringing back hopes to the children and their parent and drawing the smile of pleasure and satisfaction on the faces of lot of people in Kurdistan Region.



Also Another media team from the Bambini Cardiopatici nel Mondo Association, Mr.Giovanni Zanchi and Mr.Rocco Toscani accompanied by the medical team to cover their activities.

