

30 January 2013 Jerusalem: The East Jerusalem Hospitals Network (EJHN) is holding its second annual conference on January 30, 31, 2013, in Jerusalem. The aim of the conference is to serve as a forum for Palestinian health care leaders to present and discuss key issues facing the hospitals in East Jerusalem. Areas of focus include quality improvement and patient safety, risk management, health workforce and clinical referrals.

The conference is organized by WHO and the EJHN as part of the EU-funded project "East Jerusalem Hospitals: Network for Quality". Participants include leaders from the local and international community, and staff from the East Jerusalem hospitals, as well as staff from the hospitals in the West Bank and Gaza. Dr. Tawfiq Nasser, chair of the EJHN, will open the conference. Hospital leaders will present on a variety of topics including patient safety interventions, the future of the Palestinian health workforce, and clinical quality in patient referrals.

Tony Laurance, WHO Head of Office, said: "The East Jerusalem Hospitals are facing unprecedented challenges. This conference is an opportunity for them to share their experiences and strengthen their collaboration."

The EU Head of Operations, Sergio Piccolo, praised the work done by the East Jerusalem Hospitals so far and called for additional efforts to achieve the objectives of this program. Piccolo added that: " We have walked a long way along the path of our cooperation in the course of this year, and indeed, the title of the conference reflects the reality: We are striving for excellence in a situation of crisis. But still we are determined to overcome all the obstacles and reach our shared goal: stronger partnership for better services for the Palestinian people."

The EJHN was established in 1997 under the leadership and guidance of the late Feisal Hussein, with the aim of unifying the health facilities in East Jerusalem and emphasizing their critical role within the Palestinian health system. Their work has focused on developing its institutions, improving the quality of the services provided and assuring a continuum of care.

The EJHN includes six facilities: Princess Basma Rehabilitation Center, August Victoria Hospital, Maqassed Hospital, St. John Eye Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society Hospital. The East Jerusalem Hospitals serve as the main centers for specialized care within the Palestinian health system. Patients needing services and procedures

that are not available in the West Bank and Gaza are referred for treatment in the EJHN facilities by the Palestinian Ministry of Health. Over half of the EJHN workload comes from referred patients from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. As such, the EJHN plays a critical role in providing health services to the Palestinian people.

The EJHN and its six facilities have been supported by the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the last four years. Through the latest phase of this programme the EU provided EUR2.4 million which allowed the hospitals to improve the quality of their health services, upgrade their status to the highest international standards (ISO certification and most recently, Joint Commission International [\[1\]](#) accreditation) and engage in joint initiatives and activities (e.g. risk management, legal representation).

Contacts:

WHO – Ms. Aisha Mansour, 02-540-0595

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[1] The JCI is a US based organization that has established patient safety and quality service standards and goals for health service facilities

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