

Welcome to the Sixty eighth issue of the Health Inforum Newsletter.

QUOTE
OF THE
MONTH

People are as happy as they make up their minds to be. ~ Abe Lincoln~

HEALTH NEWS



1st Conference of the Health Sciences Center (HSC), Al-Quds University in March 2006

The Health Sciences Center (HSC) in Al-Quds University is holding its first international conference under the title "Health Sciences and Future Challenges" March 15/16, 2006 in Al-Quds University, Jerusalem- Abu Deis.

The Conference aims to provide a forum for health professionals to communicate and explore new advances in health sciences and to network with colleagues from the region and from abroad.

International and local professionals will tackle the health related issues including medical issues with clinical relevance and applications as well as public health issues and key challenges facing the Palestinian health care system. For more information please visit the Conference website: <http://www.alquds.edu/conferences/hsc/>

Petition to allow Palestinian patient with AIDS to enter Israel for treatment

Over the past six weeks, one Palestinian patient affected by AIDS and hemophilia, in need of urgent medical care, has not been allowed to enter Israel.

On 29th January, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the Israel Medical Association (IMA) and the patient himself filed a petition to the Israeli High Court demanding that the patient, a young Palestinian from the Gaza Strip, be allowed to enter Israel to receive treatment at Tel Hashomer Hospital, where he was treated in the past. Medical opinions appended to the petition testify to the dire state of the patient. For more information please visit www.phr.org.il

World Cancer Day: global action to avert 8 million cancer-related deaths by 2015.

On the 3rd of February 2006 WHO celebrated the World Cancer Day. Cancer is a leading cause of death globally: an estimated 7.6 million people died of cancer in 2005. WHO is working to achieve the set goal of reducing the death rates of chronic disease by 2% per annum by 2015. This would avert 8 millions of the projected 84 million deaths due to cancer in the next decade. For more information please visit www.who.int.

CARE: "Emergency Assistance to Sustain Primary Health Care Services"

Medical teams from the Ministry of Health, the Palestinian Medical Relief Committees and the Union of Health Work Committees regularly visit 20 vulnerable communities in Jenin, Toubas and Hebron to provide primary health care services. The teams are composed by a general practitioner, a community health worker and a lab technician. In support of this activity, CARE International recently provided the teams with six vehicles, within the project "Emergency Assistance to Sustain Primary Health Care Services in Jenin, Toubas and Hebron", funded by ECHO. For more information, please visit www.carewbg.org

CONTENTS

Health News

- 1st Conference of the Health Sciences Center (HSC), Al-Quds University in March 2006
- Petition to allow Palestinian patient with AIDS to enter Israel for treatment
- World Cancer Day: global action to avert 8 million cancer-related deaths by 2015.
- CARE: "Emergency Assistance to Sustain Primary Health Care Services"
- PCBS: "Health Care Providers and Beneficiaries Survey – 2005"

Report

Referral abroad of patients from Gaza Strip January 2006.

Casualties & access incidents

During January, there were 14 episodes of ambulance delay with a total of 14 hours, and 2 cases of denied access.

PCBS: "Health Care Providers and Beneficiaries Survey – 2005"

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) published recently the preliminary findings of the "Health Care Providers and Beneficiaries Survey – 2005", the results indicate that around half of all health care visits (47.0%) took place at MoH facilities. This was followed by the private and UNRWA sectors, which served 20.7% and 20.5% respectively

The survey showed also that Palestinian Ministry of Health occupied the first place with 45.3% of total health expenditures, followed by the NGOs sector, which constituted 28.0% of the total. The UNRWA and Private sectors came at the end with 14.9% and 11.8% of the total health expenditures, respectively for each. For more information please read the PCBS press release on http://www.pcbs.org/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/helt05Eusers1.pdf

REPORT

**Referral abroad of patients from Gaza Strip
January 2006.**

WHO/Health Inforum report

Access to specialized health services outside Gaza Strip continued to be monitored by Healthinforum, during January 2006¹.

Access through Erez

Access to health care abroad through Erez has been requested –and mostly granted - for both outpatient and inpatient care during all days of January 2006, despite the closure of the checkpoint to Palestinians from the 1st to the 21st and on the 25th of January.

During the period 1st – 31st of January, referral abroad was requested for 741 patients, out of which 719 (97%) received the permit and could leave through Erez. 22 patients did not receive the permit, on the basis of unspecified security reasons. Each patient has been accompanied by one person, mainly a family member.

Critical patients and patients unable to walk could leave by ambulance through a "back to back" transfer. Critical patients are transferred from a Palestinian to an Israeli ambulance (equipped for intensive care but with high costs), whilst non critical patients unable to walk are transferred from a Palestinian to another Palestinian ambulance that does not enter Gaza and is kept under the supervision of IDF.

In January, the daily number of ambulance transits ranged from 3 to 9 per day. Since the 1st of January a microwave searching device has been put in place at the Israeli side of the crossing, and all patients are submitted to it. It has been reported from the same sources that the patient discomfort from the searching procedures and the waiting time increased since the 19th of January when Israeli security checks were handed over to a private company.

Figure 1: Access of patients through Erez during 1-31 January, 2006

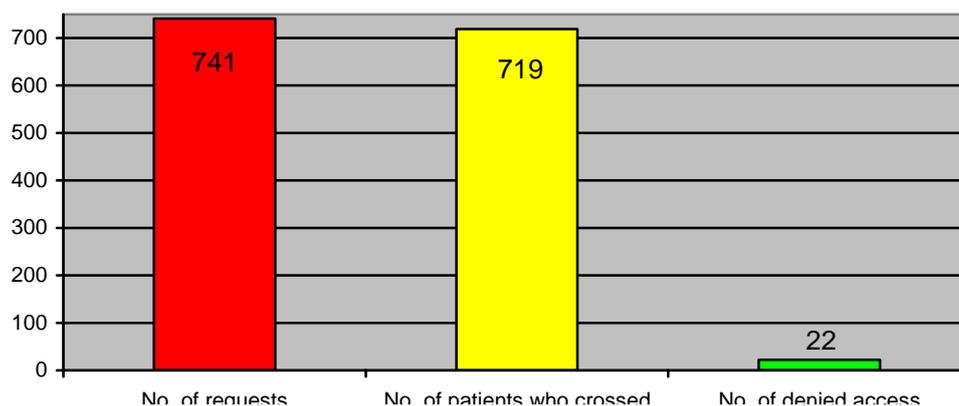


Figure 2: Monthly percentage of patients who crossed Erez (out of the total requests) during the period 1st September, 2005 – 31st January, 2006

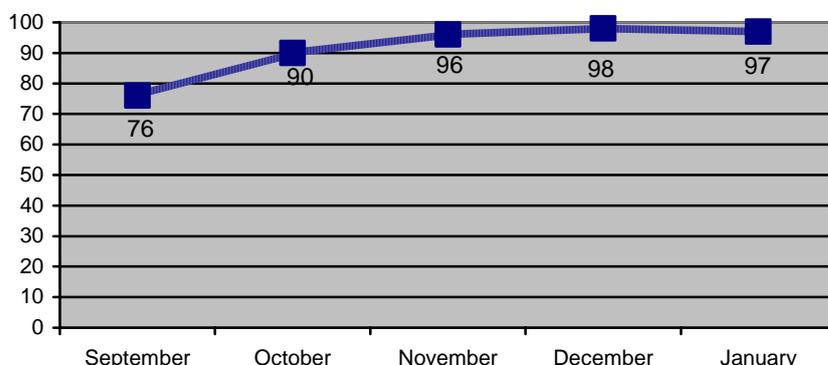
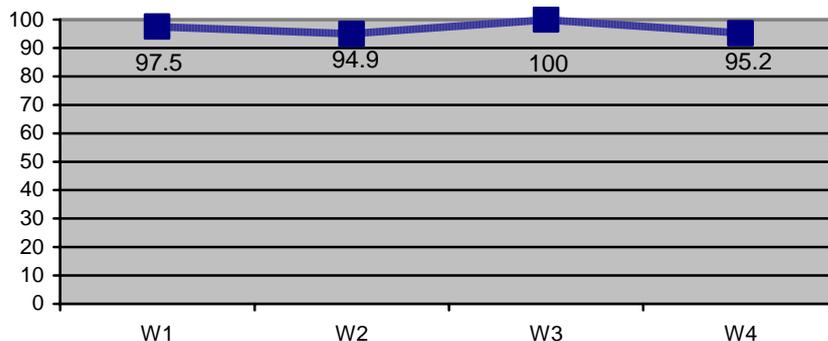


Figure 3: Weekly percentage of patients who crossed Erez (out of the total requests) during the period 1st – 31st January, 2006



Access through Rafah

From 1st to 17th of January, the daily working hours were 8 per day (8 am-4pm). After the 17th the number of working hours has been extended to 9 per day (8am-5pm).

The treatment abroad department in the Ministry of Health issued documents for referral care abroad to Egypt and Jordan to 785 patients. These patients travel through Rafah border crossing. The referral document is valid for one month and needs to be renewed in case the referral does not happen during this period.

The number of patients with a MoH request for referral abroad who crossed Rafah border was 263¹, according to the mentioned sources. Male patients in the age group 18 – 40, if holding a referral request, do not need the permit usually requested by the Egyptian to this age group.

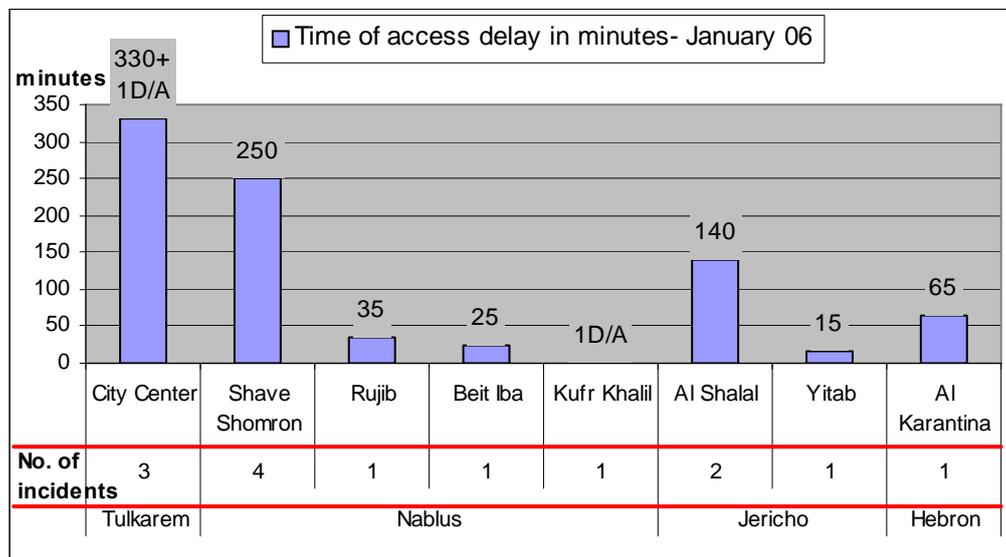
Urgent patients are transported to the border with a Palestinian ambulance and then transferred to an Egyptian ambulance with a “back to back” system, to continue in the Egyptian territory. The transferal procedure is done in the Palestinian territory for both departure and arrival. The transferal procedure took 5-30 minutes, compared to 2-8 hours before the disengagement period. The number of urgent patients who left Rafah border by ambulances is 39 patients, in addition to, 61 patients arrived from Egypt.

¹ The source of reported data is the Health DCO Coordinator of the Ministry of Health and the Director General of Rafah border crossing.

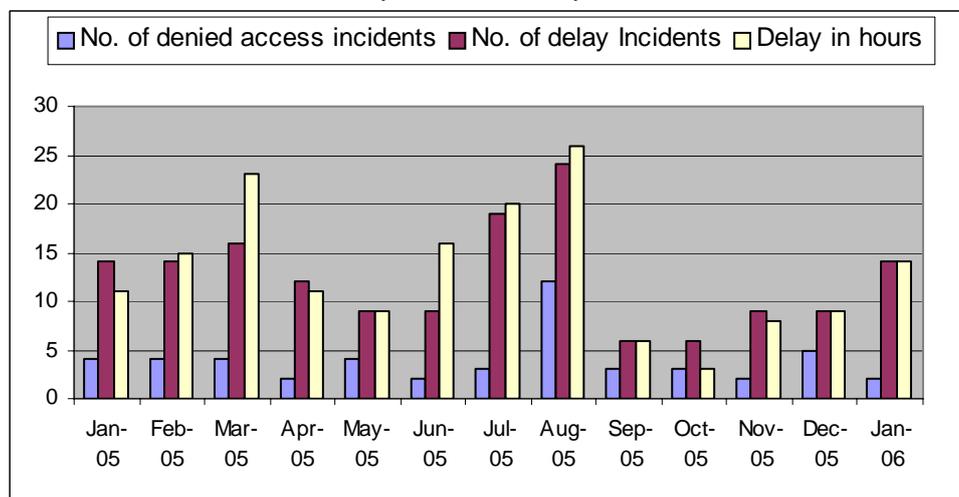
² Only cases holding the documents released by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, referral abroad department, have been recorded as patient crossing, whilst patients who do not hold the referral documents have been recorded as normal passengers.

CASUALTIES & HEALTH INCIDENTS

During January 2006, there were 14 episodes of ambulance delay (for a total delay of 14 hrs). In 2 cases the access was totally denied, according to PRCS. The following diagram shows the total number of ambulance incidents by area, the time of delay and the episodes of denied access (D/A) at the checkpoints:



This diagram shows the variation from January 2005 – January 2006:



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please feel free to contact us at:

Health Informum, c/o WHO Jerusalem office/ Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, Tel: 02 5400 595, Fax: 02 581 0193

Health Informum, c/o WHO, Gaza office, Al-Bayed building, Al-Halbi St. Tel: 08-2822033, Fax: 02-2845409, Email: info@healthinformum.org

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