

Palestinian fishermen, Rafah, 2012. ©WHO oPt



Referral of Patients from the Gaza Strip

Ref: RAD 2 (March 22, 2013)

Summary

- **Patients denied access:** Two patients were denied permits, a 3-year-old girl and a 53-year-old woman.
- **Patients interrogated:** 17 patients (1 F; 16 M) who had applied for permits to cross Erez checkpoint were requested to appear for Israeli security interviews.
- **Patients delayed:** 69 patients (27 F; 42 M) did not receive a response to their permit application and missed their hospital appointments.
- **Referrals within oPt:** February represented the highest number of referrals (466) to East Jerusalem hospitals in the past three years.
- **Referrals to Jordan:** Only one patient received financial coverage from the Ministry of Health for treatment in Jordanian hospitals. 7 self-funded patients applied for permits.
- **Referrals to non-MoH facilities inside Gaza:** Referrals to private and NGO facilities inside Gaza were 207, an increase of 57% over January.
- **Medical reasons for referrals:** Most January 2013 referrals were for treatment in oncology (15%), heart catheterization (11%), nuclear medicine (7%), ophthalmology (7%), urology (6%), orthopaedics (6%), neurosurgery (6%), haematology (6%), neurology (5%), and heart surgery (5%).

Referrals increased to Jerusalem

The total of 1,285 patients from Gaza were referred by the Ministry of Health (MoH) in February, a 13% increase over the monthly average in 2012 of 1,139. According to Gaza Referral Abroad Department (RAD) data, 466 (36.26%) were referred to hospitals in East Jerusalem, 262 (20.39%) to Egypt, 190 (14.79%) to Israel, 159 (12.37%) to West Bank hospitals, 1 (0.08%) to Jordan and 207 (16.11%) to NGO and private hospitals inside the Gaza Strip (Table 1). It was the highest monthly total for East Jerusalem in the last three years. Referrals fell slightly to Egypt because of medical coordination issues. Referrals to Israel were reduced as well. The 207 referrals to private and NGO facilities inside Gaza were higher than January. The rise was primarily due to reduced MoH capacity from malfunctioning equipment and lack of medical supplies for heart catheterization. 126 referrals were for heart catheterization, 57 for lithotripsy and 24 for MRI. The gender gap in referrals persisted in February for all age groups: 55% of referrals were males and 45% were females. 25% of all referrals were children aged 0-17 years and 20% were elderly over 60 years. Hematology, heart surgery and neurosurgery represented the highest cost per case this month, while oncology referrals were the highest total cost and the most numerous (196 referrals) due to radiotherapy and complex chemotherapy treatment not being available in Gaza.

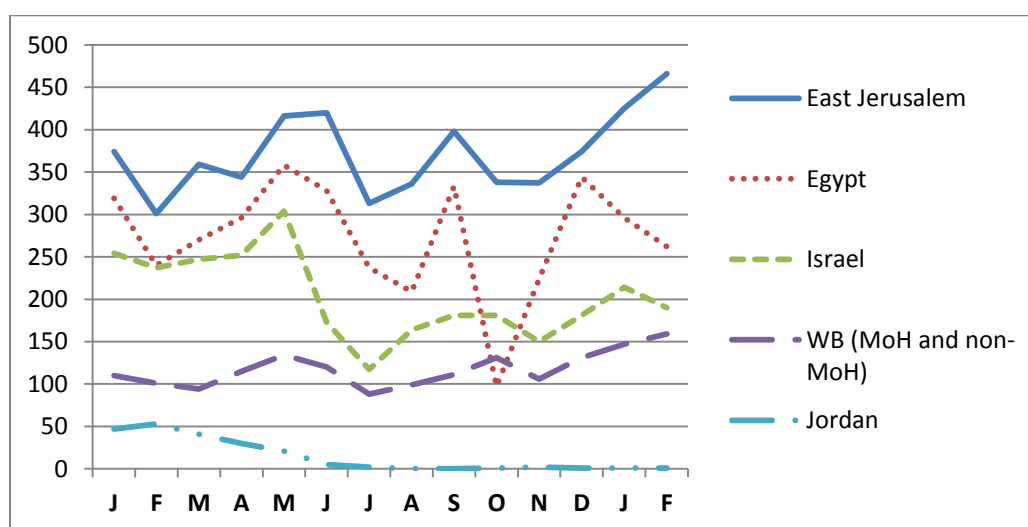
Health access: patient applications for Israeli-issued permits to cross Erez

In February 2013, applications were submitted for 907 patients to the Israeli District Liaison Office (DCL) for permits to cross Erez and access hospitals in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, in Israel or Jordan. 836 (92.17%) received permits to access Erez and 2 (0.22%) were denied (Table 2). The two denied patients were a 3-year-old girl with an orthopedic condition referred to Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem and a 53-year-old woman who had an appointment with an endocrinologist in a Jordanian hospital.

**Table 1: Palestinian MoH Referrals, by destination
January and February 2013**

Referral Destination	January	February	Total
Gaza (non-MoH facilities)	133	207	340
WB (MoH and non-MoH)	147	159	306
East Jerusalem	425	466	891
Jordan	1	1	2
Israel	214	190	404
Egypt	296	262	558
Total	1,216	1285	2501

Source: MoH- Referral Abroad Department.



*Trend of 14 months of
Referrals of Gaza Patients
(January 2012 to February
2013)*

69 patients (27 females and 42 males, 7.6% of the total applicants) did not receive a response and therefore lost their appointments in the hospitals, delaying their medical care; 17 of the delayed were children under 18 years, 4 were elderly over 60, 12 were patients with malignant diseases while 4 had congenital heart anomalies. Responses should be given with 10 days but 14 applicants did not receive a response after 2 weeks and 6 did not receive a response after 30 days. Of the 69 delayed patients, 17 were for scheduled appointments in Israeli hospitals and the rest were for West Bank hospitals including East Jerusalem.

Table 2: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on patient permit requests to cross Erez, by age and sex, February 2013.

Age group	Total		Approved		Denied		Delayed		Called for GSS interrogation	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
0 - 3	54	60	50	59	1	0	3	1	0	0
4 - 17	88	112	81	106	0	0	7	6	0	0
18 - 40	114	105	101	81	0	0	13	24	1	12
41 - 60	103	110	99	102	1	0	3	8	0	4
Over 60	71	90	70	87	0	0	1	3	0	0
Sub-total	430	477	401	435	2	0	27	42	1	16
Total	907		836 (92.17%)		2 (0.22%)		69 (7.6%)		17 (1.87%)	

17 patients (1.87% of the total applicants), one woman and 16 men were called for interrogation by Israeli General Security Services (GSS) as a condition to process their application. Only 2 were granted permits after interrogation while the rest received no response.

In February 89% of Israeli permit applicants were referrals financially covered by MoH. The remaining patients were covered by different sources (**Table 3**). The Palestinian General Authority for Civil Affairs registered 771 patients and 716 companions travelling through Erez checkpoint to Israel and oPt during February. 48 patients were transferred by ambulance through Erez; 15 were urgent cases and transferred during off-duty hours (**Table 4**).

Table 3: Number of patient applications and percentage by source of fund, February 2013

Financial coverage source	Total / %
Ministry of Health	804 (88.64%)
Self-funded	45 (4.96%)
Peres Center for Peace	26 (2.87%)
Physicians for Human Rights-Israel	15 (1.65%)
Nour Ala-Al-Alam	15 (1.65%)
Others	2 (0.22%)
Total	907 (99.99)

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office, Gaza

Table 4: Crossings data for treatment outside Gaza, February 2012

Point of exit	Patients/companions crossing	Ambulance transfers (back-to-back)	Days open in month
Erez crossing (north)	771 patients/716 companions	48	Open 24 days ; Closed 4 days (4 Saturdays)
Rafah crossing (south)	560 (patients/ companions)	53	Open 28 days ; Closed 0 days

Source: General Authority of Civil Affairs and Emergency Medical Services in the MoH in Gaza.

According to the Emergency Medical Services of MoH in Gaza, their office coordinated the travel of 560 people to Egypt. 53 patients were transferred by ambulance with 74 companions. The remaining 433 were patients and their companions who travelled through Rafah terminal as regular passengers.

Table 5: Israeli District Liaison Office decisions on permit requests to cross Erez, by response, sex of applicant (number and %); a comparison of the current year with the previous one.

Period	February 2012		February 2013		January – February 2012		January – February 2013	
Total	766 (F:351; M:415)		907 (F:430; M:477)		1,668 (F:780; M:888)		1,703 (F:806; M:897)	
Approved	701 (F:321; M:380)	91.5%	836 (F:401; M:435)	92.17%	1,548 (F:731; M:817)	92.8%	1,574 (F:755; M:819)	92.42%
Denied	10 (F:3; M:7)	1.3%	2 (F: 2; M: 0)	0.22%	16 (F:4; M:12)	0.96%	4 (F:3; M:1)	0.23%
Delayed	55 (F:27; M:28)	7.2%	69 (F:27; M:42)	7.6%	104 (F:45; M:59)	6.24%	125 (F:48; M:77)	7.34%
-- of which called for GSS interrogation (of total applicants)	21 (F:71; M:14)	2.7%	17 (F:1; M:16)	1.87%	40 (F:12; M:28)	2.4%	29 (F:4; M:25)	2.29%

Source: Palestinian District Coordination Office, Gaza.

Drug Shortages in Gaza

The number of drug items at zero stock in the MoH Gaza Central Drug Store for the month of February 2013 was 142 (29.6%) out of 480 of the essential drug list and drug items at low stock (sufficient for less than 3 months) were 70. Regarding medical disposable items, 494 (54.8%) were at zero stock levels out of 902 items on the essential disposable list and those at low stock were 88.

Table 6: Essential drug and disposable items at zero stock: MoH central stores, January and February 2013

Month	Drugs at zero stock	% (of 480 drugs)	Medical disposables at zero stock	% (902 items)
January	157	32.7	471	52.2
February	142	29.6	494	54.8

Source: MoH Central Drug Stores, Gaza.