

Palestinian Territories

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The Israeli occupation hinders the functioning of the health system

Since June 1967, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are under Israeli occupation. This occupation hinders the development of medical services. The Palestinian Authority, in charge of health, cannot answer the needs of the population: lack of resources and medical expertise, lack of equipments, financial difficulties, closing of checkpoints, restriction of the moves of civil and medical population. More specifically, according to the last report of WHO, the surrounding of Gaza hinders the functioning of health system, supply of medical equipment, training of health personnel and stops severe patients from receiving adapted treatments in time outside of Gaza Strip.

Two Societies of Dermatology in occupied Palestinian territories

In Palestinian society, dermatologists works mainly in private practice. There is no hospital with a dermatology department for a population of 4,2 millions of inhabitants. Recently, the Palestinian Ministry of Health nominated 7 dermatologists in the public sector and 1 in army.

• The organisation of dermatology in the West Bank

The West Bank's dermatologists are gathered within the Association of Dermatology. This association was created in 1996 with 9 dermatologists, it is a specialised group of the Medical Union of the West Bank. The Palestinian Association of Dermatology has 34 members, to date. The last 2 years, the new board of the Palestinian Association of Dermatology has initiated a new guidance for a better cooperation between dermatologists, a clear and responsible management of all the activities. Since January 2009, the association is called the Palestinian Society of Dermatology. Its first international congress of dermatology took place on March 27-30, 2009.

• The organisation of dermatology in the Gaza Strip

The Gaza Strip population has been under an Egyptian occupation before being under the Israeli occupation. So, their Medical Union could not be integrated in the Jordanian Medical Union.

So, there are two Societies of Dermatology: one for the West Bank et one for the Gaza Strip.

Consanguinity, one of the cause of the prevalence of autosomal recessive genodermatoses in the Palestinian society

• Traditional marriage and consanguinity

Traditional marriage, often between first cousins, has been considered for hundreds of years as normal -almost as a right- and without consequences on the health of children to be. This kind of marriage can be explained by the will of keeping goods and properties within the same family or as an easy and economic way of getting married in a close and conservative society, mainly rural.

• Autosomal recessive genodermatoses

Genodermatoses diagnosis is difficult without a dermatopathologist (biopsies are usually unconvulsive or missread) and the DNA mapping is to expensive.

Epidermolysis bullosa, Ichthyosis, Palmoplantar Keratoderma, Neurofibromatosis, Xeroderma Pigmentosum, Ectodermal Dysplasia and Incontinentia Pigmenti are genodermatoses present in the Palestinian territories.

There are also very rare autosomal recessive genodermatoses such as the papular atrichia, Naxos disease, autosomal recessive ectodermal dysplasia, the H-syndrom and unidentified diseases.

The papular atrichia can be considered as a typically Palestinian genodermatoses: in a perimeter of 20 km², between Bethleem and Hebron, hundreds of people are affected. It must be the highest incidence in the world.

The recognition of genodermatoses, a public health issue

The recognition of autosomal recessive genodermatoses linked to the development of a primary health education and genetic counseling, could raise the population awareness on the health risks of in-family marriages.