

***CISEPO – By the Numbers
with Publications and Testimonials***

May, 2009

Key Facts

- *The Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO – www.cisepo.ca), established in 1984, is a Canadian registered, charitable NGO (non-governmental organization), working closely with the Peter A Silverman Centre for International Health, Mount Sinai Hospital and the Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto.*
- From its creation, CISEPO has been committed to developing health care programming as an essential bridge to peaceful cooperation in the Middle East. Working primarily on genetically related hearing loss in infants and children, CISEPO encourages non-political, cross border cooperation in the region on research and program delivery, professional development and continuing medical education, scientific professional exchanges, modeling professional behaviour of the highest standards as a key to peaceful cooperation in the wider sphere.
- In 1995 *CISEPO* was invited by the private office of the late King Hussein of Jordan to consider how a Canadian umbrella organization might develop cross-border, health sector collaborations between Arabs and Israelis.
- *CISEPO's* lead program is the *Middle East Association for Managing Hearing Loss (MEHA)*; *MEHA* is the first joint Arab and Israeli professional association. His Royal Highness, Prince Firas bin Raad of the Royal Court of Jordan is *MEHA's* patron.
- From 2000 – 2003, testing of 17,000 Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian newborn infants, in the pilot *MEHA #1* project, provided the first objective data on elevated levels of genetically inherited deafness in children across the Middle East.

- From 2004 to date, over 163,000 Jordanian newborns have been hearing tested in the recently completed *MEHA* project #4, as a pilot project for universal newborn hearing screening so as to advocate for change to Jordanian national health policy underpinned by explicit cross-border cooperation. To date, over 400 Canadian hearing aids have been distributed to deaf, newly diagnosed, poor and needy infants in Jordan.
- Through *CISEPO/MEHA* programming, hundreds of children in the Middle East have been supported in their habilitation with hearing aids, auditory therapy, and family and professional education.
- In addition to its operating network of more than 1000 individuals in Canada and the Middle East, *CISEPO* benefits from the ongoing contributions of more than 100 volunteer consultants who are senior academics and business leaders.
- *CISEPO* has built active partnerships with more than 20 hospitals in the Middle East (12 Israeli, 8 Jordanian, 1 Palestinian); 10 universities (5 Israeli, 4 Jordanian, 3 Palestinian); the Royal Medical Service (RMS) of Jordan; and dozens of Arab and Israeli mother and child community health centres and NGOs.
- *CISEPO* has arranged for more than 3500 Arab and Israeli professionals and ordinary citizens to meet face-to-face in the Middle East through joint educational and research projects and public workshops. Since 2005, that number has increased dramatically with the increasingly frequent and successful use of cooperative, interactive medical rounds through high quality videoteleconferencing
- As of 2009, *the MEHA Regional Centre in Amman* has completed more than a decade of continuous operation in audiologic training, public education and rehabilitative service across Jordan and across borders with Israeli and Palestinian practitioners and deaf patients.
- In April 2009, *American/CISEPO* was granted US IRS registered charitable, tax exempt status as a 501 (c)(3) Non-profit Org.

Background History

- Since 1996, *CISEPO* through joint capacity-building, training and educational activities, including Continuing Medical Education (CME) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD), has been responsible over the past 12 years for implementing cooperative Arab and Israeli continuing education and training events, workshops, eHealth programs and planning meetings which have been sponsored by CISEPO/University of Toronto and held in: Amman (1996), Gaza (1997), Nablus (1997), Amman (1998), Petah Tikvah (1998), Amman (1999), Jerusalem (1999), Abu Dis (1999), Tel Aviv (1999), Toronto (2000), Tel Aviv (2000), Bethlehem (2000), Toronto (2000), Tel Aviv (2001), Jerusalem (2001), Jerusalem (2001), Nicosia (2002), Cernobbio(2002), Haifa (2003), Ber Sheva (2003), Ankara (2003), Aqaba (2003), Tel Aviv (2003), Tenerife (2003), Amman (2003), Brussels (2004), Cernobbio (2004), Petra (2004), Toronto (2004), Amman (2005), Jerusalem (2005), Ashkelon (2005), Havana (2005), Jerusalem (2005), Vienna (2006), Amman (2006), Toronto (2007), Tel Aviv (2007), Irbid (2007), Washington (2007), Toronto (2008)
- Since 1997, *CISEPO's Visiting Professors for Peace Program* has brought twelve leading Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian academics to Canada to connect Canadian society to the Middle East peace process.
- Since 2001, *CISEPO* has organized three joint planning meetings between Deans or their representatives from all four Israeli medical schools (Tel Aviv University, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Technion – Israel Institute of Technology and Ben Gurion University of the Negev); the two Jordanian university medical schools (University of Jordan and Jordan University of Science and Technology); and two leading Palestinian universities (Al Quds University and Bethlehem University).
- From 2000 – 2003, *MEHA* pilot project #1 tested 8,000 Israeli, 8,000

Jordanian and 1000 Palestinian newborns for hearing loss. Those detected as suffering from hearing loss have been habilitated in all three areas, as part of *MEHA* cross-border programming.

- In June 2003, *CISEPO* in partnership with the Student University Network for Social and International Health [SUNSIH] initiated its first student-driven program, bringing Canadian, Israeli and Palestinian medical students together in Ontario for four weeks to work on a volunteer basis with children with cancer and to collaborate on joint training and research projects concerning physical, psychosocial and societal aspects of dealing with pediatric oncology.
- In August 2004, a second *CISEPO* student program addressed genetic hearing loss and added Jordanian students to the grouping.
- In January 4, 2005, building on the success of *CISEPO/MEHA* #1 project, *MEHA* initiated an intensive pilot universal newborn hearing screening in Jordan (*MEHA* #4), with support from *CISEPO*, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Royal Medical Service of Jordan (RMS), the Ministry of Health of Jordan and the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf (Salt) as partners and national service providers. In addition to Canadians and Jordanians, both Israeli and Palestinian health-care professionals provide expertise and management executive function on the *MEHA* team for program implementation. Within two years, more than 163,000 Jordanian infants were screened for hearing loss. Those infants and children found to be hearing impaired, have been fitted with hearing aids and have initiated habilitation processes with audiologists, speech therapists, and other specialists as required.
- In June 2005, *CISEPO* was instrumental in organizing a pioneering multi-point e-Health video-conference beginning the Peter A Silverman Global e-Health Program (PASGeP), linking Canada with the Middle East. Throughout 2006 and 2007, *CISEPO* has facilitated, in cooperation with Baycrest Centre for Geriatric Care, monthly eHealth video-conferencing 'rounds' in geriatric behavioural neurology, which now includes sixteen Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian

and Palestinian hospitals and university research institutes.

- In July, 2005, York University commenced a summer student externship in strategic partnership with *CISEPO*, placing students beyond the health sector in on-the-ground projects in the Middle East with *CISEPO* regional supervisors.
- In August 2005, a third *CISEPO* medical and science student elective program brought eight Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian students together for four weeks in the field of nutrition, strongly focused in the Hospital for Sick Children.
- On January 9, 2007, responsibility for the national program of early detection of hearing loss was transferred from MEHA to the Jordan Ministry of Health as an integral part of its offer of services to new born babies. Jordan thus became the fourth country in the world with a national program of universal hearing loss detection in new born infants.
- In July 2007, the fourth medical and science student elective program brought together a new team of eight Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian participants to focus attention on pediatric emergency medicine, results-based research, peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- In 2007, *CISEPO* initiated a student led group at York University to encourage greater awareness of health programming as peace building, greater understanding of the changing situation in the Middle East, the importance of peace building and peaceful cooperation in a diverse university environment.
- In the summers of 2006 and 2007, Canadian medical students have worked on groundbreaking student placements in clinics in Israel and Egypt, focusing on community based emergency medicine, with a specialization on hyperbaric 'dive' medicine.
- In 2007, a Palestinian physician will complete his post graduate studies in otolaryngology at the Edith Wolfson Medical

Centre/University of Tel Aviv, an opportunity facilitated by *CISEPO*, and will open a comprehensive clinic in Nablus, committed to cross-border cooperation, the first of its kind in the West Bank.

- In 2007, under the aegis of MEHA, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian research scientists, audiologists, neurologists, speech pathologists will initiate a large scale longitudinal cross border research project (MEHA #3) to investigate Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), the neurological dimension of hearing loss in children.
- In 2007, *CISEPO*, through its internationally-recognized model for building cooperation networks of knowledge, expanded its people-to-people based outreach activities in the Middle East, with the strategic inclusion of Arab-American medical professionals and members of the Middle Eastern Diaspora communities in the United States to work alongside our Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian partners.
- In 2007, *CISEPO*'s successful pilot experience of two years of e-Health programming, under the aegis of the PASGeP, became the programmatic model for the Canadian eHealth engagement
- In July 2008, *CISEPO* continued its international summer student exchange program in Emergency Pediatric Medicine (IPEME) with the Hospital for Sick Children and other Toronto hospital partners. The fifth medical and science student elective program brought together a new team of eight Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian participants to focus attention on pediatric emergency medicine, results-based research, peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- The sixth summer student exchange elective in pediatric emergency medicine is already in final preparation for summer, 2009

Publications

Networks of Knowledge : Stein, Janice G; Stren, Richard; Fitzgibbon, Joy; MacLean, Melissa; published by University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2001

‘Promoting Arab and Israeli Cooperation: peace-building through health initiatives’ published in *The Lancet*, an internationally renowned medical publication, in January 2005

University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada (Prof H Skinner PhD, P Aber MSc, Prof C Chalin PhD, Prof A P Williams PhD, Prof A Noyek MD); **Al Quds University, Abu Deis, West Bank** (Prof Z Abdeen PhD, H Abdeen MD, R O Jebara MA); **Jordan University of Science and Technology, Irbid, Jordan** (Z El Nasser MD); **University of Haifa, Haifa, Israel** (J Attias PhD); **Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel** (K B Avraham PhD) (Y Roth MD); **Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, Israel** (Prof R Carmi MD); **Mount Sinai Hospital, Toronto, ON, Canada** (Prof C Chalin, Prof A Noyek); **Royal Medical Services of Jordan, Amman, Jordan** (M Hijazi MD); **Bethlehem University, Bethlehem, West Bank** (M Kanaan PhD); **Technion—Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel** (Prof H Pratt PhD); **Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA** (F Raad MPH); and **Amman University, Amman, Jordan** (M Al-Masri PhD).

‘The Prevalence of Congenital and Early Onset Hearing Loss in Jordanian and Israeli Infants’ J. Attias et al., published in *The International Journal of Audiology*, 2006

‘ Building Bridges of Understanding Through Continuing Education and Professional Development of Arabs and Israelis’, Noyek, A. et al., published in *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions*, 2006

‘Genomic Analysis of a Heterogeneous Mendelian Phenotype: multiple novel alleles for inherited hearing loss in the Palestinian population’ Avraham, K.B. et al., published in *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 2006

Testimonials

- In December 2001, *CISEPO* was nominated for the Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize for 2002.
- On June 28, 2004, *CISEPO* was recognized for its humanitarian work and received, with its founder Dr Arnold Noyek, the Canadian Red Cross Power of Humanity Award, presented by Her Majesty Queen Noor in Toronto at a community dinner at the Sheraton Hotel.
- On May 4, 2009, *CISEPO* founder Dr Arnold Noyek will receive the prestigious Luwik and Estelle Jus Memorial Human Rights Prize at the University of Toronto in recognition of *CISEPO/MEHA*'s work for human rights and against discrimination.
- "*CISEPO*'s work in the region not only addresses a pressing health concern. Through the partnerships it has developed, *CISEPO* continues to promote greater understanding and cooperation among the people of the region." HE John Holmes, Ambassador of Canada to Jordan, January 2006.
- "We are extremely pleased with *CISEPO*'s innovation in pooling partners together to provide creative solutions to the Palestinian health challenges" Dominique Rossetti, Deputy Representative/Représentant Adjoint Head, Canadian Cooperation Program/Chef du Program Canadien de Coopération, Ramallah, February, 2006.
- "*CISEPO* as an NGO plays a remarkable peace-building role in the Middle East. *CISEPO*, as a Canadian umbrella organization, uniquely and with equity, brings together governments, universities, institutions, communities and individuals in people-to-people, capacity building, needs-based, health sector activities. *CISEPO* helps build bridges of regional cooperation across borders, and these are significant bridges of cooperation that otherwise would not happen, especially in

these times of tension and difficulty.” His Royal Highness Prince Firas bin Raad, the Royal Court of Jordan and Patron of MEHA, January 2009.

- “CISEPO is a remarkable NGO that has functioned well for years without publicity. All of its members are exceptionally committed volunteer medical, health and science faculty at various Canadian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian universities and institutions, who simply do the job. It is the excellence of their work that makes the cooperation sustainable.” Haim Divon, Head of MASHAV, Deputy Director General, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 2009
- “The opportunities your program has offered to the participants beyond the medical education, the unique experience of relationship building with people they would not normally meet let alone live with, work with or study with is truly a rare and valuable component to building peace and understanding among all cultures. Thank you for your efforts and that of CISEPO.” Nabil Barto, Jordanian Ambassador to Canada, January 2009
- “The people-to-people cooperative projects in the health sector enable all those in the region to move beyond our longstanding tensions and suspicions and to see the other as decent human beings and partners for peace.” Consul-General of Israel to Toronto and Western Canada, Amir Gissin, January 2009

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