

UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN TREATMENT AT FREE JERUSALEM DENTAL CLINIC



Dr. Molinas and Dalia



Dr. Stan Frohlinger and Feige



Drs. Molinas and Madar with Veronica

On Sunday, March 13th, Dental Volunteers for Israel received its first Ukrainian refugee patient, which would turn out to be the first of many in desperate need for emergency dental care. With the sudden influx of Ukrainian refugees into Israel, DVI's volunteer coordinator, Sharon Spira, quickly built relationships formally and informally with the various individuals and groups (for example, Bridges for Peace and a dedicated social worker at Welfare Services) so that the clinic might assist them upon arrival and begin treating this population. DVI's Michelle Levine states "DVI's referral base continues to grow – and we stand ready to treat as many Ukrainian refugees as possible."

DVI Takes On Entire Ukrainian Orphanage for Treatment: Nes Harim has resettled the Children's Home of Shatner, Ukraine. This shelter houses children whose parents are unable to care for them either temporarily or long term due to their financial situation or other issues such as addiction, as well as children who have been removed from their homes by court order. With the outbreak of the war, Chabad emissaries who run the children's home immediately worked to get the children living there out to safety in Israel. As the situation worsened, these Chabad emissaries managed to also extricate the close to one hundred women, children and elderly who had come to them looking for shelter. These one hundred and fifty individuals, ranging in age from five months to seventy-seven years, are now living in facilities in Nes Harim, beginning to adapt to their new realities, and struggling on multiple levels. When DVI Director Dr. Roy Petel met with the Nes Harim social worker, "I was so moved by the story of their perilous escape from Ukraine, and from the generosity of Chabad to transport all of the refugees that had simply taken shelter in the Shatner orphanage, I decided in this case to treat every patient of every age. As policy in agreement with the Ministry of Health, DVI treats patients aged 4-26 and 65+. DVI is privileged to provide totally free dental care to this entire group."

Fourteen-year-old Ukrainian refugee in treatment: Coming from a divorced family, Dalia, her twin sister and ten-year-old sister were all residents of the Children's Home in Shatner since her mother was unable to provide for them. One morning when Dalia was outside, "I heard a plane overhead and then the booms started. I was so scared and ran inside, not sure where my sisters were. I ran downstairs, as far below ground level as possible." As the situation worsened, bus transport was arranged for all of the children and they made it safely to Israel, leaving behind everyone dear to them. "I speak to my mother. She said the 'booming' usually begins in the evening where she lives, and then she runs to a cellar behind her building. My father is fighting in the war." Despite her smile, her anxiety is evident. Dalia is one of the first from Nes Harim to have come to DVI for treatment because of the intense oral pain they are experiencing. It is quite clear that these girls have not seen a dentist for years. The initial checkup and x-rays showed that extensive dental work is needed. Some teeth will need to be extracted; others need root canals. Of course, there are cavities to be filled and sealants to be applied. The girls will get some serious oral hygiene education together with oral hygiene treatments. DVI is doing everything to save as many of their teeth as possible. These youngsters have so much pain in their lives; at least DVI can alleviate their oral pain and enable them to enjoy the simple pleasures of food once again. Dalia tries very hard to communicate without her counselor translating, as she had studied Hebrew in the Ukraine. When Dr. Davis Thomas (a professor at Rutgers School of Dental Medicine and at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry) was treating her and asked Dalia what she wants to be when she grows up, she said she wants to be a translator as she already speaks Ukrainian, Russian, Hebrew and some English. Dr. Thomas offered to teach her some Indian languages which he speaks and then told her, "The best student I ever had was from the Ukraine. I am certain you will be so successful, you will end up being a translator at the UN in New York!"



Dr. Holskin with Dalia and Veronica



Mushky the counselor supporting Angelica in treatment with Dr. Ahmad



Profile of a Four-Year Old Ukrainian Girl in Treatment at DVI, after fleeing Ukraine with her pregnant mother: <https://dental-dvi.org.il/feige-a-4-year-old-jewish-refugee-from-ukraine-newly-arrived-in-jerusalem/>

As CNN's Clarissa Ward states, while standing amongst Ukrainians fleeing their homes, "they don't have any idea where they're going to go - they don't have any idea where they're going to sleep tonight." Some refugees will find beds in the homes of DVI dentists. An Australian DVI dentist and his wife have loaned out their London apartment to a Ukrainian refugee family and two Polish DVI dentists are sharing their entire home! Drs. Małgorzata and Pawel Ocios (or Margaret and Paul as they call themselves at DVI) have volunteered at DVI many times, and are truly part of the DVI global family. Their hearts are really in it, and having known her, they give Trudi Birger's reasons - to help the suffering directly, and in a powerful way. Drs Ocios were scheduled to volunteer in May 2022; they contacted DVI as soon as Israel opened up for tourists, excited to be able to come back to Israel, as the pandemic winds down. But Paul and Margaret live in Poland near the Ukrainian border, in a big home, as empty nesters - and as Russia invaded their neighbors, they realized they would have important work to do at home. Early March they canceled their trip to DVI/Israel and began preparing their home for guests. Their three daughters, Basia, Alexandra and Suzanne came to visit, to help do an intensive Pesach-style Spring cleaning of the whole house. They promptly notified the Israeli Embassy that they could send them Jewish Ukrainians fleeing the war. Their daughters also volunteered to host refugees in their apartments. The Ocios family hope to offer some comfort: "They're escaping their homes and towns which are actively being bombed. Maybe today they will be here, after three days of a terrible journey." Drs Pawel and Margaret Ocios ultimately ended up hosting a Ukrainian surgeon's family in their home. "The wife Lena has two children, are being made

comfortable, for example temporary private small kitchen. Wow! She has started school in our village, Nastia is a student of medical school; fortunately, she has online classes. They now all have obtained formal permission to remain here and we are waiting for the war to end." And, like all DVI dentists who are driven to help others, providing hospitality is not enough, when the Ocios' realized they could help by also providing refugees with free dental care. That's right - they are opening their practice to Ukrainian refugees for dental care. DVI dentists, working the front lines...directly aiding the people suffering the most. The DVI family recognizes their efforts and values that embody Trudi's legacy - not just to Israel, but to the world. Indeed, several DVI dentists, like Dr. Sue Gross from Minnesota, heard about the Ocios' plan and inquired about flying to Poland to volunteer in their clinic.

According to Michelle Levine, "The kneejerk response of a DVI dentist is to help when needed, and that is always inspiring. At this time, every dentist who volunteers at DVI is volunteering with Ukrainian refugees - and we are in particular need of endodontists, as so many of them require root canal treatments. It is bittersweet, because it is so emotionally moving seeing DVI dentists engaging with the refugees in the sweetest way possible, providing them desperately needed care, but the refugees themselves are worried about friends and family left behind, and though they are feeling a very warm welcome in Jerusalem, they are afraid they will never be able to return to Ukraine." DVI's Board of Directors, helmed by Doron, Oded and Gil Birger, extend their gratitude to AO-Toronto and Alpha Omega Foundation of Canada, for its ongoing support, and for making this work possible.

For more information about DVI, please visit <http://www.canadianfriendsofdvi.org/> or email michelle@dental-dvi.org