INTERVIEW
with — Dr. Ibrahim al-Salti
general dentist, Sydney, Australia

“We have the skills to help alleviate the suffering of fellow humans”

Q: Dr. al-Salti, you recently attended Tribune CME’s Clinical Masters™ Program in Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry in Athens, Greece. What attracted you to this training session?
A: The short answer would be the caliber of the presenters. I have heard Dr. Stavros Pelekanos speak before and he is a very engaging and knowledgeable clinician. His ability to explain evidence-based concepts greatly appeals to me. Furthermore, Dr. Ed McLaren is a world authority on ceramics. I have heard many good reviews from fellow colleagues about his courses and decided to come and learn from him.

Q: What was your experience of the course?
A: The lecturers were great, very informative and engaging. The social events with fellow colleagues from around the world, along with the course presenters, were memorable. Not only did we learn some great things, but we also made some new friends along the way.

Q: You combined this further education with volunteer work at a refugee camp in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. What motivated this admirable and inspirational commitment through the Health-Point Foundation?

Fig. 1 Dr. Ibrahim al-Salti treating a young refugee in Thessaloniki.
As dentists, we have the skills to help alleviate the suffering of fellow humans. When possible, we should also help those who have been affected severely by drastic life events, such as war and the displacement that follows. Our medical colleagues often report the need for dental professionals at refugee camps because of the multiple dental problems they encounter. I stumbled across a Facebook post, shared by a friend, seeking dental volunteers in northern Greece. I contacted the organization and scheduled a time to go, which neatly coincided with the course in Athens.

It was my first time volunteering with the Health-Point Foundation. They have been amazing—efficient in organization and dealing with dentists from across the world. One also gets to work alongside dentists from across the globe and forge new friendships as well. They have been a pleasure to work with.

Q: Have you worked as a volunteer before?
A: Yes, many times. I volunteered back home in Sydney during National Dental Rescue Day, treating patients with limited access to oral health care. I have also worked with a number of nongovernmental organizations treating refugees in Jordan and disabled children and adolescents in the West Bank.

Q: What would you recommend to fellow dental professionals who would like to become involved in humanitarian efforts like this, but are not sure of how to get started?
A: I was in that position many years ago. The power of Google cannot be underestimated! I would recommend searching for the area of the world in which the person would like to volunteer and let that search be the starting point. Dental professionals can also contact their local dental associations, who may know of projects locally or abroad. However, if really passionate, but unable to commit to any program, then the person could maybe allocate a day to treating disadvantaged patient groups. A local trustworthy charity can often source some of these patients on one’s behalf.

Editorial note: This interview was published on March 31, 2017, on the Dental Tribune website under European news.