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**American Physicians Travel to the West Bank to Treat Palestinian Children**

AKRON, Ohio, Oct. 31, 2007 – Regardless of the conflicts going on amongst people in this world, one thing remains absolute: We all deserve access to modern medicine. One group of American doctors recently traveled to Palestine to ensure children in the region would receive specialized care that they may not otherwise have.

While the hospital systems in this region are reasonably equipped, they often lack the supplies and staff to offer advanced services. Further, military checkpoints and border restrictions complicate Palestinians' ability to travel freely, even for healthcare. Without the assistance of humanitarian groups and doctors willing to donate their time, many would not have access to the healthcare services we enjoy, according to Dr. Michael Parker, a plastic surgeon practicing with Akron Plastic Surgeons.

"While in the West Bank, we predominately performed surgeries on children to correct cleft lip and palate deformities and burn reconstruction," says Parker. "Collectively, our group performed 39 procedures during our weeklong stay. In particular, the cleft lip and palate surgeries are very beneficial, because the children who experience these problems often have difficulty eating and speaking properly."

Dr. Parker's team spent their time in the northern West Bank town of Jenin at the Jenin Government Hospital. He arrived in Israel on Sept. 1 with other groups of surgeons and nurses from Iowa, Texas and Maryland. All of the teams came with supplies donated from various U.S. medical suppliers.

Parker continues, "A procedure we performed on a three-month-old baby girl named Rahma Mahmoud Abu Alrob really helps to show the impact of the work volunteer physicians are doing in this region. This little girl was already demonstrating signs of ill health, resulting from a deformity to her palate. She was clearly having difficulty breastfeeding because of the problem, and I was afraid she wouldn't survive without the surgery. Fortunately, she endured, and we were able to correct a problem that was significantly impacting her quality of life."

This mission was sponsored by Kent, Ohio-based non-profit, Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF - [www.pcrf.net](http://www.pcrf.net)). Smile Train in New York and Operation Rainbow in Texas also supported it. PCRF took care of all of the logistics and arrangements on the ground. In addition to sponsoring trips for physicians to travel to Palestine, the group also arranges for children to travel abroad to Europe and U.S. to receive medical treatment.

"PCRF works to provide cost-free surgical care that isn't available in the country," says Mike Lowe of Palestine Children's Relief Fund. "We do this by transporting children out of country for treatment or by sponsoring trips for doctors to visit the country. We've been organizing trips to Palestine since 1997, with the ultimate goal of not only providing treatment, but also educating medical personnel on advanced techniques. Our hope is that one day, there won't be a need for outside intervention."



"I started participating in trips to underserved regions during my residency 24 years ago. It's hard to put into words what these missions mean to myself and likeminded physicians," says Parker. "It's always a thrill to know you've helped better the life of a patient. But helping someone who simply doesn't have access to treatment takes that feeling to the next level."

The doctors of Akron Plastic Surgeons have been providing quality health care since 1985. A leading regional provider of cosmetic and reconstructive surgery, Akron Plastic Surgeons is composed of three board-certified physicians with over 50 years of combined experience: Michael G. Parker, M.D., Douglas S. Wagner, M.D., and John C. Pedersen, M.D., F.A.C.S. For more information, call 330.253.9161 or visit [akronplasticsurgeons.com](http://akronplasticsurgeons.com).