

AUSiMED
australia israel medical research

Insight

Winter 2014



An update on AUSiMED's collaborative medical research activities between Australia and Israel

2014
Paediatric Research Symposium

SPECIAL EDITION

In this Winter edition of Insight, AUSiMED is really excited to share with you the series of articles in the Jewish News by Peter Kohn about our first international collaborative Paediatric Research Symposium in Melbourne between Australian and Israeli researchers on 13 & 14 May this year

Medical gift of friendship

The Australian Jewish News – Page 8 - Friday, May 30, 2014

A VALUABLE piece of medical equipment – an amino acid analyser – has been gifted to Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem by the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (MCRI).

Professor David Thorburn of the Melbourne-based organisation donated the unit to Hadassah after learning that a similar one at the Israeli hospital had been irreparably damaged. The unit, one of only two in Israel, would have cost the hospital \$US150,000 to replace.

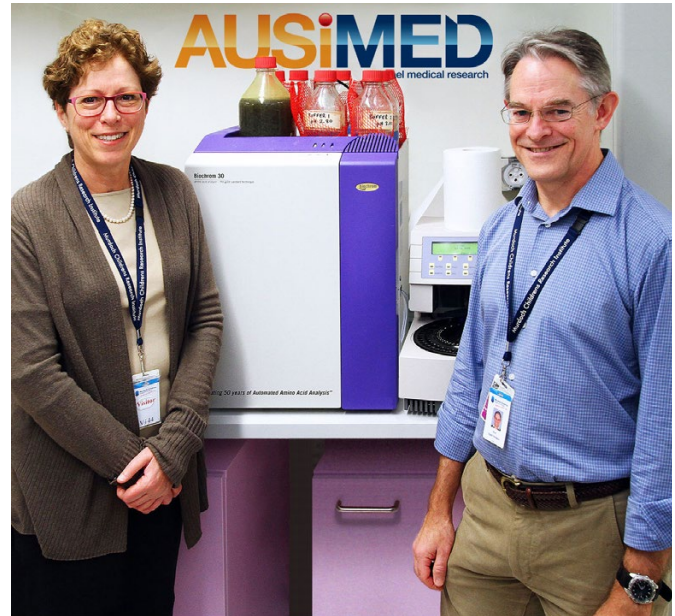
Professor Orly Elpeleg, leader of the genetics research group at Hadassah and one of the world’s foremost experts in genetic disorders, said the gift will contribute enormously to maintaining research momentum in the genetics area at Hadassah.

“It was a totally unexpected gesture from David Thorburn and an amazing first dividend from what is shaping up as a very productive research

relationship between our two institutions,” she said.

Earlier this month, an Israeli delegation of seven medical researchers flew to Australia to participate in two conference streams – genetics and chronic disease – in fields identified by MCRI as areas where Israel could add significant value by way of active collaboration.

Hailing the success of the conference, Roz Kaldor-Aroni, CEO of AUSiMED, which fosters collaborative medical research between Australia and Israel, said the Australian and Israeli



Hadassah Hospital’s Orly Elpeleg and David Thorburn from MCRI with the amino acid analyser.

delegates “have so much in common scientifically but most importantly both groups of researchers just got on so well at the personal level, which is the critical dimension for a successful collaboration”.

DNA expert helping sick kids



Photo: Peter Haskin

Professor Orly Elpeleg speaking at this week’s symposium.

The Australian Jewish News – Page 8 - Friday, May 16, 2014

AN Israeli paediatrics expert has been sharing her knowledge on children’s medical disorders with leading Melbourne doctors this week at a conference run by Australian- Israeli medical research initiative AUSiMED.

Professor Orly Elpeleg, a genetics authority at Jerusalem’s Hadassah Hospital, joined other Israeli paediatric researchers on Tuesday

and Wednesday to exchange ideas with counterparts from the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute and the Royal Children’s Hospital at the Melbourne conference.

According to Elpeleg, a major concern is the rise in undiagnosed genetic disorders among children and young people.

“In Israel, parents are going from one centre to the next, hoping that someone will recognise what’s wrong with their child. But having new genomic tools in our hands at Hadassah, we’ve established an undiagnosed patients program.

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Australia, Israel in paediatrics parley

The Australian Jewish News – Page 5 - Friday, May 9, 2014

RESEARCHERS from the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) and Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem will meet in Melbourne next week for the first major paediatric research symposium organised by AUSiMED, a medical research initiative between Australia and Israel.

The May 13-14 symposium will bring together 22 of the world's leading researchers from Australia and Israel to discuss the treatment of children affected by chronic illness and genetic disorders.

It will also consider issues around community health, in which Australia is a world leader.

MCRI is at the forefront of gene-based technologies that are changing health care. Professor Vicky Anderson, whose research group recently established the Australian Centre for Child Neuropsychological Studies at MCRI, told The AJN her team will be looking at synergies between Hadassah and the MCRI.

"Kids who have chronic illness tend to have a lifetime connection with the hospital and spend a lot of time there, and also have some difficulties adjusting to their problems, and their families also have difficulties," she said.

Anderson works with children who have cystic fibrosis, metabolic disorders and other problems, as well as working with their families.

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"We simply read the patient's DNA like you read a book. It's not a technology we've invented, but we've definitely been one of the first in the world to implement it and integrate it into clinical practice on a daily basis," she told The AJN.

Elpeleg said genomics has advanced remarkably in the past decade. "What was the Human Genome Project 10 years ago for \$3 billion has now become a routine clinical tool to diagnose patients."

She acknowledged that her work does not necessarily involve curing young

The symposium stems from a memorandum of understanding between MCRI and Hadassah in 2012 to carry out collaborative research funded by philanthropy.

AUSiMED president Ron Finkel said Israel's success in treating chronic illnesses and genetic disorders among Israelis and Palestinians is well documented. The symposium would see researchers sharing that knowledge.

"One of the long-term aims is to treat chronically ill patients at a proposed Centre for Excellence for Chronic Disease at the Royal Children's Hospital. This will follow the model created by Hadassah," Finkel said.

According to AUSiMED CEO Roz Kaldor-Aroni, work being done by Professor Frank Oberklaid and his Centre for Community Child Health team at the Royal Children's Hospital is of interest to paediatricians and trainers in Israel. Director of Hadassah's National Centre for Community Child Health Dr Hava Gadassi – who will address

patients by replacing damaged genes. But, she said, at least by analysing and recognising the source of the disorder, there is enough information to enable the family to make important decisions.

She said parents presented with an analysis of gene abnormalities might decide not to have more children, although on the bright side, "sometimes it can give a clue for treatment".

With therapeutic trials becoming more common, parents can take advantage of these, armed with knowledge of their child's illness, she said.

"This is the type of work we're doing



Hadassah's Professor Eitan Kerem is a participant in next week's symposium.

the symposium – spent two-and-a-half years working with Oberklaid as a paediatric fellow before returning to Israel.

Participants in the symposium will include Hadassah's head of paediatrics, Professor Eitan Kerem, whose model for treating chronic illness in children could become a template for Australian treatment.

Other Israeli speakers will include Hadassah health specialists Professor Orly Elpeleg, Dr Asaf Ta-Shma and Dr Shimon Edvardson.

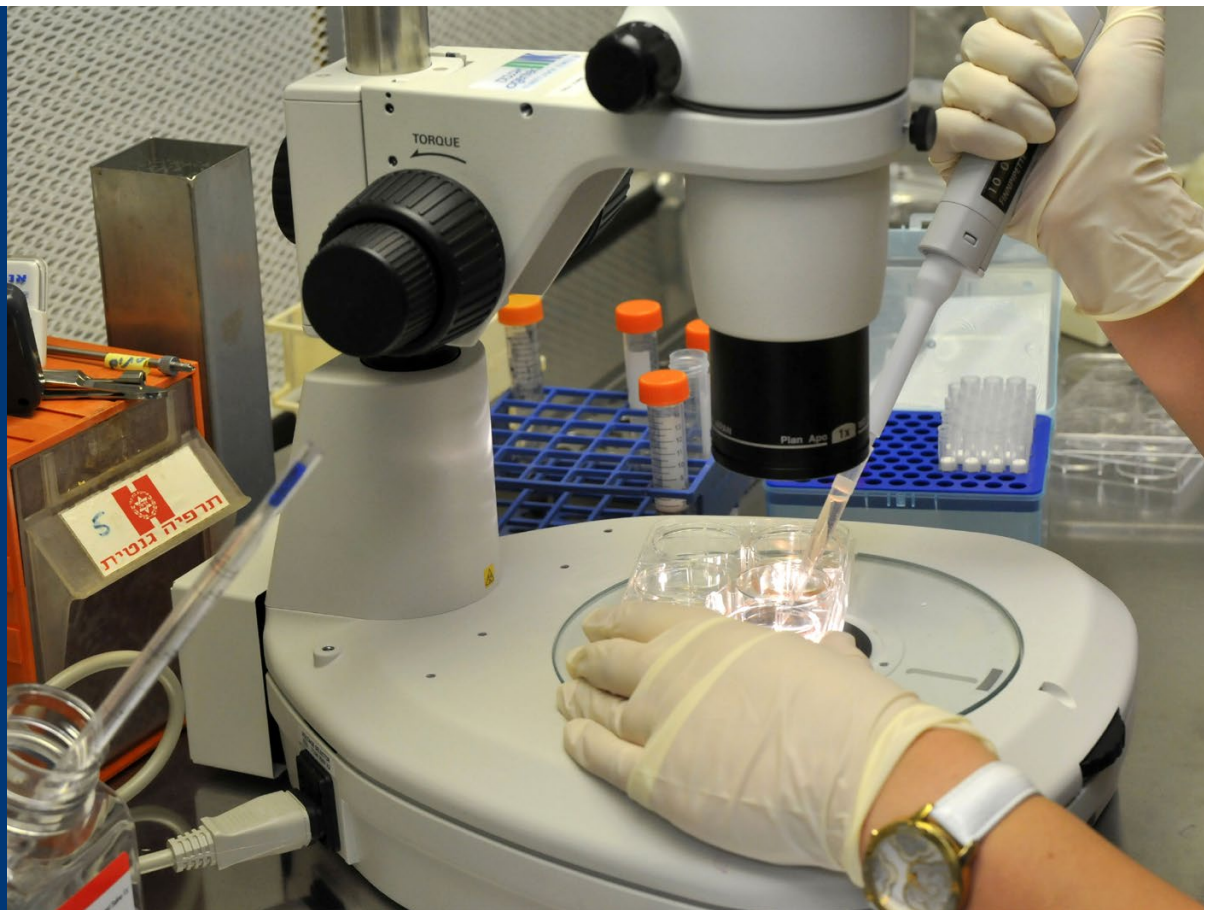
They will join speakers from MCRI, including infant sleep expert Associate Professor Harriet Hiscock, community screening specialist Professor Melissa Wake and adolescent mental health authority Professor George Patton.

at Hadassah, and we're coming here to find partners to fill some gaps we still have, and we hope that people here have overcome."

During her trip Elpeleg is also taking part in a panel discussion today (Thursday), co-sponsored by AUSiMED and WIZO, on thorny issues surrounding the ethics and religious values related to genetic medicine and the so-called "designer baby" syndrome.

Also on the panel are Dr Fleur Cattrall, a fertility specialist with Melbourne IVF, and Professor Agnes Bankier, a clinical geneticist at the Austin Hospital.

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