



1 for 3 News

* Water * Health * Education *

* الماء * الصحة * التعليم *

March 2019



Improving the Lives of People with Diabetes

Diabetes is a chronic disease that can threaten daily routines—and lives—if not well managed. Dr. David Scales and Dr. Bram Wispelwey, the founding doctors of the Community Health Worker program (Health for Palestine), determined diabetes to be one of the most troubling chronic conditions in Aida and Azza Camps. Since the program’s inception just over a year ago, the Community Health Worker (CHW) program has made important interventions for patients with diabetes.

Community Health Workers (CHWs) are able to do outreach and troubleshoot in coordination with Bethlehem-based director Nash’at Jawabreh as well as Drs. Scales and Wispelwey. For example, CHWs helped a family establish that a man in his 80s was in a diabetic coma. As Dr. Scales explains, “Diabetic comas are life threatening. When blood sugar gets very low, the brain doesn’t have enough energy to function, so shuts down, first producing a coma, sometime seizures, then, without intervention, death.” The elderly man went to the hospital and his situation was stabilized, but the cause of the crisis remained unclear. Dr. Scales determined that he was on too much diabetes medication. The team worked with his other doctors to adjust his medicine.

As Dr. Scales recalled, “Another patient in Azza Camp had very high blood sugars. With Sara Al-Azzeh, one of the CHWs, we discovered that she eats a lot of fruit, which is high in fructose and raises blood sugar, and was not taking enough insulin.” The CHW team advised her on how to adjust her diet and medication.

A third patient whose life has been transformed by CHW attention is Nasir Darwish, 49. Darwish is married with two children and living in Aida Refugee Camp. He worked for UNRWA’s sanitation unit. Before the CHWs

started seeing him, Darwish was fully dependent on insulin and struggling with his sugar level. He had experienced several diabetic comas. Darwish’s unpredictable health forced him to stay home and go on unpaid leave from his job.

Under the supervision of the program doctors, the CHWs took his sugar level a few times a day and put him on a special diet until his sugar level came back to normal and remained stable for few weeks. They helped him diminish his dependence on insulin. Gradually, they helped get him outside the house to start seeing people and take walks. Soon after that, Darwish was able to return to work. For the first time in a long time, he was in control of his diet and in charge of monitoring his health. The CHWs have continued the relationship they built. Now, they visit him every few days at his workplace to make sure he is doing well. In Aida, making “office calls” can be as transformative as making “house calls”!



Checking Darwish’s sugar levels outside his office.
All photos courtesy of Lajee unless otherwise noted.

Please join us on Saturday, May 4, in Cambridge for our 4th Annual Walk for Water in Support of Palestinian Refugees! Register [here](#), or support a friend’s walk with a donation. Photo: Pat Westwater-Jong.



Read more!

David Scales on [“House Calls in Aida,” Mondoweiss](#): “Almost 50 percent of all deaths in the West Bank can be attributed to heart disease and strokes, both long-term consequences of chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension. The nearest UNRWA clinic ...is about three miles away and uphill. Health for Palestine aims to change this by bringing care into refugees’ homes.”

Voices of 1for3: Community Health Workers Ashgaan Awais & Mariam Darwish

When did you begin work as a CHW? What were you doing before?

AA: I started working with Lajee in March 2018. Before I started with the CHW project I worked at a publishing house and as a salesperson.

MD: I have never had a job before this! This is my first job ever.



Ashgaan at a CHW training

Where are you from? Where were you raised?

AA: Originally, I am from Allar Village, and I was raised in Aida Camp.

MD: I am from Al-Malha Village, near Jerusalem, but I was born and raised in Aida.

What is the most important thing you have learned in your work?

AA: I came to know the camp very well. As young people, we can bring change in people's lives, especially for older folks who have been living with chronic illness and constant worries that their health will decline. It's our duty to improve conditions for our community members.

MD: In my first year here, I learned humanity and a sense of responsibility. I learned how to build social and professional relationships.

What is the biggest challenge you face in your work?

MD: It is a challenge to convince people to adapt to a different routine to deal with their sickness. Also, patients used to refuse the idea of bringing a doctor into their homes. But we keep trying with everyone, and so we are moving forward with this project. We don't take no for an answer!



Mariam visiting a patient.

What is the biggest success you have experienced in your work?

MD: One of the cases we handled is that of my uncle [Nasir Darwish]. It was a big success. When we started working with him, his family didn't know how to support him. We helped him get his life and his job back.

AA: The patients love us. They feel that our presence in their lives is important. We see progress in their health and know they are taking their medication regularly.

Up on the Roof At Lajee!



Youth from the Environment Unit planting



Lettuce and onion sprouts & a passion fruit vine

Read More!

Nancy Murray on "[Farming While Palestinian](#)," *Mondoweiss*, 3/22/19, World Water Day.

"Palestinian agriculture which, according to [World Bank figures](#), accounted for 13 percent of the Palestinian GDP in 1994, accounts for only three percent today."



World Water Day, Boston!

On a chilly March 22, the Alliance for Water Justice organized a standout on the Boston University Bridge. Water is a human right! Photo by Larry Aaronson.