

“The St. John Eye Hospital and Its Importance in the History of the Holy Land”

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With thanks to former Board Chair and Order Hospitaller Dr. John Talbot,
English Priory Hospitaller Col. Sheena Davies, John Reed MD, Wikipedia



Blessed Gerard Tum, Founder Order of St. John of Jerusalem c. 1040 – September 3, 1120



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- Appears July 1099 during siege of Muslim Jerusalem by the First Crusade.
 - Administrator of a hospice.
 - After the Crusaders captured Jerusalem, Gerard's hospice soon became a proper hospital caring for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land.



Old City of Jerusalem

- Hospital cared for the poor, whatever their illness (except leprosy), nationality, sex or religion.
- Staff of brothers and sisters and professional physicians and surgeons.
- Staffed a mobile tented hospital for the Christian army.
- Those too ill in the streets to admit themselves were sought out by the Order's servants – a primitive ambulance service.

- 1187 - Jerusalem lost to Saladin (near right). Knights move to the port of Acre in Galilee. Saladin again drives the Knights from Acre after the Siege of Acre (far right).
- 1291 - moved to Limassol, Cyprus.



- 1309 - moved to Rhodes, built temporary hospital.
- 1314 – 1356 a new hospital was established in Rhodes followed by a grander building in 1440.

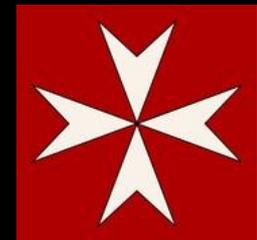




1522 - during the Ottoman Empire, Suleiman the Magnificent drove the Knights from Rhodes to Corinth, Greece for two years, then on to Malta in 1523.



- 1523 – 1798 Knights managed an impressive Sacred Infirmary and famous school of anatomy and surgery.
- Fort St. Angelo in Valletta, Malta – above left.
- The St. John Co-Cathedrals and Armory survive today in Malta's capital Valletta – above right.





- 1798 - Napoleon invaded Malta.
- The Order headed by Grand Master Ferdinand Von Hompesch (right), surrendered without resistance.



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- Von Hompesch went into exile. Other knights scattered to France, Spain, Prussia, Bavaria, Italy and England arranging separate royal protection.



July 7th, 1882, a committee meeting in the Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, chaired by the Earl of Shaftesbury, attended by members of the public, “and throughout the meeting very hearty sympathy was evinced”.

Funds were to be raised to build a hospital in Jerusalem on land given by the Sultan Musurus Pacha after appeals by the Government of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, specifically her son the Prince of Wales, to Turkey’s Ambassador to England.





Lady Isabel Burton (1831-1896), wife of
Sir Richard and author of ‘The Inner Life
of Syria, Palestine and the Holy Land’
(1875)

Lady Isabel wrote in August 1881: “Nowhere are there such beautiful eyes, and nowhere so eaten up with dirt and disease, without hope or remedy, as in Syria. A good English Oculist would be God’s own blessing out there, the whole country would swarm to him.” She goes on to describe the clinical picture of trachoma: “The disease begins from birth, with dirt neglect, flies and sun. You will find old peoples’ eyes, say at fifty, gone incurably. Youths and girls may still be saved, and parents trained to wash the babies’ eyes, and keep flies off which settle on offal, and then on the eyes, and nobody drives them away.”

An eye hospital is built on the first of three sites, now commemorated in the Muristan section of the Old City.



- Dr. J.C. Waddell, assistant surgeon to the Shrewsbury Eye & Ear Hospital, was duly dispatched in November 1882.
- After six months, he was seeing an average of 80 patients a day, and sometimes as many as 140.
- The total attendance was 6,318 and at least “1000 cures have been effected”.

Trachoma is still a leading cause of preventable blindness today – mostly in Africa and the Middle East.



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- In the 20th century, up to 350,000 were screened in a year. But they were mostly trachoma, examined with a torch, and told to wash their eyes.
 - Lid surgery was performed on those with inturned eye lids.



In 1901, the hospital moved to a second facility that is now the Mount Zion Hotel outside the Old City Walls.



In 1960, the hospital located to its current site in Sheikh Jarrah.



- Dr. David Paton volunteered from 1961-1962 with support from NEI and IEF.
- Shown at right with a young King Hussein of Jordan demonstrating a successful corneal graft.
- King Hussein signed a donor card.



A typical day for Dr. John Reed in the eye clinic at the St. John Eye Hospital in 1979.



Additional clinics at Anabta and Hebron in the West Bank and Gaza.

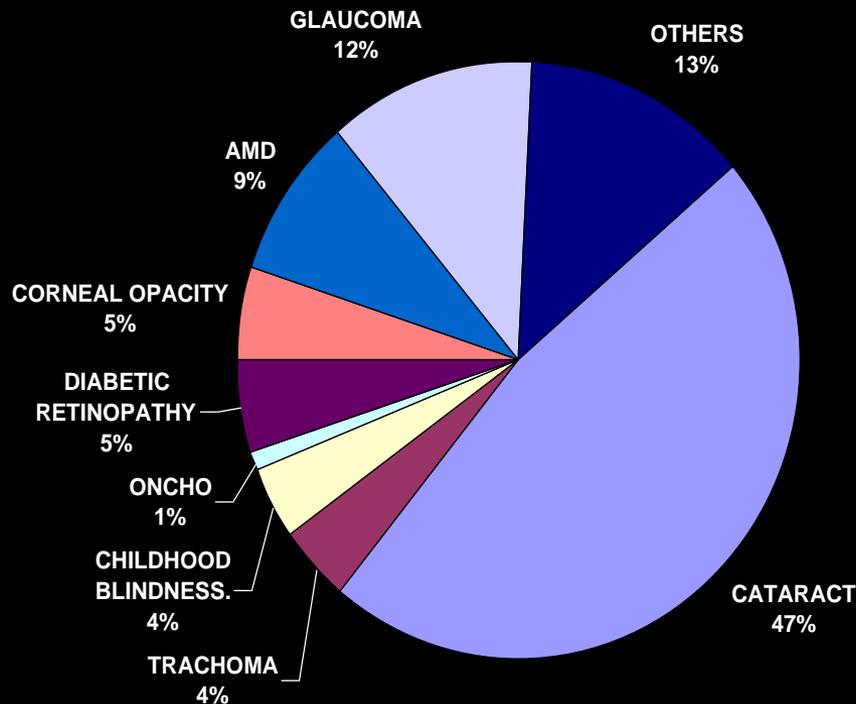
- Corneal transplant surgery.
- New Medical Retina Unit.
- Outreach programs.
- Full complement of general ophthalmologists and sub-specialists.



- Ophthalmologist Residency Training Program. US Priority supports Dr. Ala'a Al-Talbishi.
- Ophthalmic Nurse Training Program. One nurse supported by Connecticut Chapter.



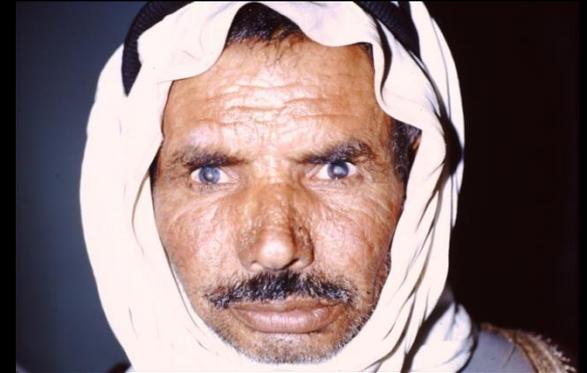
Global causes of Blindness – W.H.O.



Best corrected
Visual Acuity
< 3/60 (0.05)

RAAB Study in Occupied Palestinian Territories 2007
Blindness prevalence in study participants over age 50 years
Pop. 3,761,300 (2007)

- 3.4% blind (US is <1%)
- 2.0% severe visual impairment 3/60-6/60
- 7.4% visual impairment 6/60-6/18
- **Cataract responsible for 55% of blindness**



Data 2013:

- 114,154 patients examined up from 111,498 in 2012
- 4,156 major eye operations down from 4,414 in 2012
- 3,000 were cataract operations down from 3,125 in 2012 (both reductions due to OR refurbishment)
- 675 major eye operations on children up from 674 in 2012



- Left: Dr. Salam Erikat (left), daughter of Palestinian Peace Negotiator Saeb Erikat, receives her diploma from Mrs. Saul Merin after completing her ophthalmology training at the St. John Eye Hospital.
- Right: Saeb Erikat (left) with 82 y/o Ibrahim Isaac (middle) who was born in 1930 and joined the St. John Eye Hospital at its second site on Bethlehem Road as a nurse in 1945 at age 16. He retired in 1997 after 52 years of service.
- Photos: Awards Ceremony in the Cloisters, St. John Eye Hospital, Sept. 2012



The Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem has, throughout its history, faced conflict. In the 11th century and for the past 132 years, the hospital has provided sight-saving care for all who come to its doors, no matter their ability to pay. This is their calling and ours.



It is an incredible privilege for us to have a personal connection to such a very special place in the Holy Land.

Thank you!