

Editorial:

David Applebaum: 1952 – Sept 9, 2003



Dr. David Applebaum

David Applebaum was murdered along with his young daughter Nava and five others, three years ago this September. The circumstances were tragic and almost literary in their starkness. David had dedicated his professional life to saving lives and healing the sick among all the residents of Jerusalem and Israel. Before anyone in Israel had heard of the term 'Emergency Department,' when ED's were known as 'Triage Rooms' (Hadrei Miyun).

Having trained in emergency medicine (EM) in the US, Dr Applebaum aspired to more. He opened a chain of urgent care centers as alternatives to the ERs of the hospitals, where

patients could receive unscheduled, consistent, competent and timely care. After years spent establishing an alternative to the overcrowded, and understaffed hospital system, a couple of years before his death David decided that it was time to try and make a difference within that system. He was asked to take the directorship of the ED at Shaare Tzedek Hospital in Jerusalem. There he brought his vision, energy, and leadership to bear on one of the major ED's in the city.

When the intifada was initiated in 2000, Shaare Tzedek's ED under David's direction, along with the other EDs of Jerusalem, had to step up to

deal with all too frequent terrorist attacks against the civilian population. They developed an expertise through experience that David had traveled abroad to teach. David had just returned from lecturing on the subject at a conference in New York days before his murder.

I did not know David well personally, but had been in contact with him over the years. However, after David became the head of the ED at Shaare Tzedek, we sat together on the planning committee for the annual conference of IAEM. I had the pleasure of getting to know him as a man of intelligence, wit, grace and the energy to get things done.

Dr Applebaum's deeds reflected a deep caring for his country and his people that was never at the expense of others. By building EM in Jerusalem, David's caring crossed ethnic lines. His desire to heal and help extended to all those who passed through the doors of his facility.

David was killed by a terrorist who if, in different circumstances, he had been injured and brought to the hospital, would have been treated and cared for by David in his role as physician. David, a man of good works, was out that evening doing the best of works- spending time with his daughter Nava on the night before her wedding. One can only imagine the conversation. What could be more pure, or at a higher spiritual level, than the blessing by a father of his daughter, for the last time before she steps- in a sense - out of his life and into her own? And into the café where they were

speaking, walks the opposite pole of human activity. What could be more evil, more horrifying, than a man, bent on destroying his own life gladly, if only he can kill and maim strangers with him? One wants to say that this is inhuman. But just as only humans are capable of the love a father has for a daughter, only humans – betraying their potential in every way – are capable of conceiving and carrying out such horror.

As I sit in Connecticut writing this, I listen to the Israeli army radio station on the internet, interrupting its regular programs with warnings for residents of the north of Israel to go to the bomb shelters. Another round of rocket attacks against the civilian population of Israel is underway. And the same hatred that drove the Hamas terrorist to kill David and Nava at any price (even that of his own life) is alive and well in Lebanon. Before he died, David helped defeat terrorism by limiting its real and psychological effects, in doing what he could to heal those injured in terrorist attacks in Jerusalem. I hope that his efforts in building EM in Israel, and thereby strengthening her ability to resist attacks of whatever kind, will be our inspiration and his and Nava's legacy to us.

Our thoughts are with the Applebaum family on this sad anniversary, and with the families of the fallen soldiers and civilians of this latest war in Lebanon, and with the wounded.

Michael J Drescher, MD FACEP