

Physician driven by medical urgency in Iraq

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

The young Iraqi mother, her breast shriveled of milk from malnutrition in the aftermath of war in the Persian Gulf, had a singular plea for the American doctor attending her dying child.

Nothing, she said, can be done to help my child but please, she pleaded, go back to the United States and try to do something for the next mother's child.

The selfless request still haunts West Bloomfield physician Ramsay Dass, some three months after returning from a tour of Iraqi hospitals with a medical team of 11 doctors

representing the Arab American Medical Association and five German colleagues from International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

"Until now, I cannot speak of it," Dass said recently in his first public comments about the journey. He lost 18 pounds on the trip.

Images of starving, dying children and hungry mothers too proud to weep in public continue to haunt his sleep. Current volunteer efforts on behalf of what he calls "innocents paying the highest price of war" are beginning to take a toll on his own private Oakland County medical practice.

"PEOPLE ARE DYING like nobody's business, one child every three minutes. There are no medicines, not even simple Tylenol for pain. One can of milk costs a third of one month's salary and has to be purchased on the black market.

These are children who have never experienced hunger. They are dying faster than starving children in Africa and India because they have no endurance against starvation. Some mothers are losing multiple children," said Dass, who was raised in Iraq of an Iraqi mother and British father.

After two days in Baghdad, members of the team separated, touring separate hospitals throughout Iraq. Dass toured facilities in northern cities, including Mosul, moderately damaged by allied bombing, Dahuk, which is heavily damaged, and Tel-kuf, the ancestral home of most U.S. Chaldeans which is unscathed.

"There are two types of hospitals, the poor and the affluent. All are suffering equally. There are no admissions except emergencies. Of those who enter, 80 percent die. Only hot (emergency) surgeries are performed, delaying diseases like cancer but not treating them. There are no antibiotics, no IV's.

"Remember, this is a country that was economically developing. Food was never an issue. It was almost not a third-world country. It was an exporter.

"What makes it worse, Iraqis are a very proud people. You very rarely see begging. Even if you loose a war, you must continue to have human dignity.

"The strangest part is Iraqis are not angry at America. They just

don't understand this attitude of allowing children to die," he said in reference to continuing economic sanctions.

SEARING, PAINFUL MEMORIES have turned Dass into a social activist, a driven man with a singular purpose, generating awareness about the plight of war torn Iraq, especially the children.

"I am talking to churches, synagogues and muslim clergy. I tell them, 'this is our holocaust'."

He has founded Save the Iraqi Child Committee to generate cash contributions and donations of food and medicine. "One dollar or a million, it all helps."

At his prodding, the Michigan chapter of the Arab American Medical Association has adopted a three-point program, including adopting hospitals for children in a poor section of Baghdad and in Mosul and Basrah, Basrah, nearly totally destroyed during the war, "in a sense doesn't exist anymore."

A second tour of physicians is planned in mid-September. The group will work in the adopted hospitals, providing medical expertise and services. "If you come, you donate."

Dass also hopes there will be money enough to send young patients abroad for medical care. Those whose war injuries cannot be treated in Iraq due to a lack of basic medical essentials.

An evening fund-raising event is planned Thursday, Sept. 5, at the Prestige Club in Southfield. For more information or to send donations, write Save the Iraqi Child Committee, P.O. Box 7021, Bloomfield Hills 48302 or FAX (313)546-4848.



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— Dr. Ramsay Dass



Bombing damage in Holy City of Kerbala in Southern Iraq.



photos courtesy DR. RAMSAY DASS

A child suffering from malnutrition in a Baghdad Hospital.

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Weight Loss Surprises Researchers

WASHINGTON—A nutrition organization was hopeful that a nutritionally complete "hi-tech" food tablet would help erase world hunger problems, until a study revealed that one of the ingredients could cause significant weight loss.

Researchers in Europe found that an ingredient in the aptly named product Food Source One actually caused people to lose weight, even though specifically instructed not to alter normal eating patterns, according to one study published in the prestigious British Journal of Nutrition. Researchers in an earlier study had speculated that the weight loss was due to a decrease in intestinal absorption of calories.

While the development of Food Source One, a project of National Dietary Research, would not be used to successfully fulfill its original goal, the discovery has been a windfall for overweight people. A Daytona Beach, Florida woman fighting a weight battle for 12 years used the product on the recommendation of her physician

and lost 30 pounds. She stated, "Not only have I lost 30 pounds, but my cholesterol has dropped from 232 to 143. I have two closets full of clothes which have not fit me in two years that I can now wear." In a separate report, a telephone interview revealed that a Wilmington, North Carolina pharmacist lost 14 pounds in 15 days on the product and was never hungry. Food Source One is available through physicians and pharmacies without a prescription because it is not a drug and contains only natural ingredients already known to be safe. Copies of the referenced study are available free from National Dietary Research, Suite 553, 1377 K St., Washington, DC 20005. However, please include \$2 postage & handling for each request.

Food Source One is available in chocolate, vanilla or strawberry. A 100 tablet supply...Only \$24.98

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