



F.R.O.D.O. LEADS TREATMENT AND TRAINING MISSION TO ALBANIA

During a reconnaissance visit to Albania in October F.R.O.D.O.'s Programme Manager Rick Lynas, medical advisor Dr. Robin Dunn and charity volunteer Rainela Xhemollari, met with a number of NGO's and entered into discussions with the Albanian Department of Child Protection, the Ministry of Health and staff from three local hospitals. F.R.O.D.O. is now able to confirm that the first Albanian Treatment and Training Mission will take place in Tirana in March 2009. During the mission children who have been left abandoned or orphaned as well as children from poor families will be given the chance to receive a medical assessment and treatment by a leading UK orthopaedic team.

Of all the European countries, Albania endured the darkest experience of communist rule. The total isolation of three million people for 30 years, for most, is very hard to imagine. Party leader Enva Hoxha succeeded in creating an atheistic terror state to rival North Korea. Hoxha's long 'leadership' was the most recent misfortune to befall a country whose history reveals a whole series of invasions and set-backs. Totally denied all outside contact, many really did believe the propaganda that they were the happiest people on earth, in spite of the repression and persecution.

It was not until 1992 that Albania had its first non-communist government, making it the last of the Eastern European countries to shake off the system. Subsequent years have been marred not only by chaos, materialism and the Mafia, but also the collapse of the fraudulent pyramid money scam which led to bullet-ridden anarchy in 1997. Starting recovery late, and with years of isolation and neglect to overcome, it has left Albania with the unwanted tag of Europe's poor relation.

Albania, however, at the moment is very much a young country in transition with many young doctors and medical professionals eager to learn and keen to help. Outlining the value of a Treatment and Training mission in Albania, National Director of Caritas Albania, Albert Nikolla comments 'The level of poverty in Albania is high and as a result the health conditions are not on the same level as those in Europe. Our hospitals lack proper medical equipments and instruments. Our doctors cannot perform a vast number of specific operations leaving Albanian patients without a chance of normal life and in the most unfortunate cases leading them to death.'

F.R.O.D.O.'s March mission will be lead by Dr. Mark Paterson and Dr. Manoj Ramachandran.

Dr. Paterson has been a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at the Royal London Hospital for 17 years. He has a particular interest in the surgery of neuromuscular disorders, particularly that of cerebral palsy. Dr. Paterson is a previous President of the Orthopaedic Section of the Royal Society of Medicine, has published about 50 papers in the orthopaedic and scientific literature, and is an Editorial Board member of both the Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery and Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology.

He has a keen interest in education and training, and is an examiner for the FRCS (Orth) examination and the European Board of Orthopaedic Training examination (EBOT). He teaches on pre-examination courses for orthopaedic trainees in Hong Kong. He is Honorary Secretary of the British Society for Surgery in Cerebral Palsy and is the British Orthopaedic Association Representative for Scope. He is also a Committee Member of the British Society of Children's Orthopaedic Surgery, and a prospective Council Member of the European Paediatric Orthopaedic Society. Closer to

home, he organises a London Children's Orthopaedic Club which meets every two months to discuss clinical problems.

Manoj Ramachandran is a Consultant Orthopaedics and Trauma Surgeon at St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospitals. He qualified from King's College School of Medicine with a double honours degree and *proxime accessit* to the University of London Gold Medal. Mr Ramachandran undertook three fellowship positions in paediatric and young adult orthopaedics in Sydney, Australia, the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, California and the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore. He has a strong academic interest, having authored 9 educational text books, published over 30 papers in peer-reviewed journals and presented at over 50 national and international meetings. He is currently an Honorary Senior Lecturer at the William Harvey Institute, Charterhouse Square, part of Queen Mary's, University of London. Dr. Ramachandran is the current Associate Editor of the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine and sits on committees at the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Edvin Selmania, an Albanian specialist in peroneal tendon disorders, at Tirana's Mother Teresa Hospital, will co-ordinate the F.R.O.D.O. mission which will take place in the former 250 room military hospital - a well-equipped hospital with six operating theatres.

F.R.O.D.O. Programme Manager Rick Lynas is excited about the prospect of introducing F.R.O.D.O. projects into a new country, 'These are changing times for F.R.O.D.O. Over the last year alone, alongside partner NGO's, local doctors and child protection authorities we have assessed and helped several hundred children in Romania either by giving advice on treatment, performing surgery or by providing orthotics or physiotherapy. The Tirana mission will be an opportunity to add to that number. The more missions we have the more children we can help. Four missions have already taken place in Romania with a further five planned for 2009. Hopefully before long we will be able to develop more of our programme in Albania but seeing our flagship 'Treatment and Training' project happening in Tirana is thrilling in itself'.

In a recent email to F.R.O.D.O. American ex-pat - Dr. Guy Eshelman, founder of the ABC Family health clinic in Tirana said 'I commend F.R.O.D.O. for the good work you are doing. I think that Albania, much like Romania, could benefit from your work.'

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- F.R.O.D.O. has been working in Romania since January 2006
- Mission Statement is "To transform the quality of life, provide hope and empower orphans in developing countries who suffer from disability or life threatening illness".
- Uniquely, F.R.O.D.O. focuses on helping disabled children, currently living in institutional environments. Working with partners, they identify those whose lives would be transformed if they receive treatment for their disability.
- F.R.O.D.O.'s first medical mission was led by Dr. Deborah Eastwood, a consultant children's orthopaedic surgeon at Great Ormond Street Hospital, London and The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Stanmore.
- In Romania F.R.O.D.O. also runs a national hydrocephalus control centre, gives support to an abandonment prevention programme and provides training for staff from placement centers.
- To date teams of medics have gone to various cities in Romania with further plans for missions to Moldova, Albania, Ukraine and more remote areas of Russia.
- In 2007 they were nominated as 'Best New Charity' in the UK Charity Times Awards.

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For more details please visit the F.R.O.D.O. website – www.frodokids.org
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