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Haifa's tower of medical power Rambam Hospital looks to build up, not under

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BOSTON — Conversation with Dr. Rafi Beyar, director of Rambam Hospital in Haifa, Israel, never fails to elicit astonishment. Following upon the triumph of Rambam's 2,000-bed fortified underground emergency facility, Dr. Beyar was in town last week to tout his innovative health care campus' current endeavor, the 20-story Health Discovery Tower.

The tower is a joint project between Rambam and the University of Haifa, which is a frequent collaborator.

"Rambam is the main hospital in the north of Israel," Dr. Beyar noted. "It's a big academic medical center. It has a very strong research arm; we also have the faculty of medicine from the Technion [the Israel Institute of Technology]. But we are in need of a large research space. In the last 10 years, we've built a whole new west campus with several clinical buildings. Now it's the time to build a research tower.

"We are very strong in applied research," he continued. "In innovation, in devices, in startup companies. This tower is going to be unique building: in addition to the clinical facilities there, it will have research



PHOTO: RAMBAM HOSPITAL

Director Rafi Beyar, MD, DSc, MPH

centers for Rambam, for the University of Haifa, and floors for engineering research in medicine for the Technion. It will also have an innovation hub, which is a center defined for startup companies and entrepreneurs who come with new ideas and want to be close to the clinical campus.

"It's also very important for the city of Haifa," he added, "which has defined itself as the city of life sciences. It's really a hub for combining medicine, science, technology and industry."

According to Dr. Beyar, the underground hospital cost \$350 million to build; Phase I of the

tower, including construction and equipping laboratories, should run \$60 million. He said raising the money "should take us a year or two, but I believe we'll be there."

Dr. Beyar considers Rambam's clinical and research facilities "the roots for the future [of medical] technology. These are also the roots for the future of peace."

"Twenty-five percent of our staff is local Arabs," Dr. Beyar noted. "We have patients that are coming to us from the Palestinian Authority, from Syria on a regular basis. We train physicians from the Palestinian

Authority, on a regular basis, they come.

"Shimon Peres said, on the 70th anniversary of Rambam, 'Rambam is a place that when an Arab comes at you with a knife, you don't run away,'" Dr. Beyar noted. "A normal surgeon is a Palestinian person operating on soldiers. So it's a place for coexistence, for really showing that things can be different."

Rambam provides major support for the Israel Defense Forces' medical aid program in Syria. "We've seen many [casualties of Syria's civil war]," Dr. Beyar said. "And we continue to see children and adults with injuries. Those that are most severely injured go to us; there are other hospitals in the north that participate in that, but we get the most severe ones. To a little bit less extent in the last few months, but it's still going. It's such a sad thing that's going [on] over the border, and it continues today. I don't think it [is going to] resolve."

It is a mixed blessing that Rambam can provide outstanding medical care to those injured in war. "Fortunately or unfortunately," Dr. Beyar said, "our wars are local."

Contact American Friends of Rambam at (212) 292-4499, info@aforam.org or www.aforam.org.

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