

IPEME and I

By: *Mohammed Abu Zaanona, IPEME 2015*

"I know there is strength in the differences between us. I know there is comfort, where we overlap." – Ani DiFranco

Brave people face life's challenges and work hard to overcome them and the bravest take the first step to address them even though they are not necessarily a problem. For IPEME applicants, it was a challenge to acknowledge the message of the CISEPO organization, to look beyond their differences. For a 22-year old Palestinian medical student from Gaza, IPEME was an opportunity to connect the scarred and isolated Gaza Strip through the noble profession of medicine.

My journey with IPEME 2015 was a long but enriching experience. I had to apply for a Canadian Visa which was a very difficult phase due to lack of an embassy in the Gaza Strip. I had to get an Israeli permit to do my biometrics and interview for the visa process. And to leave for Toronto I had to get a Jordanian permit and another Israeli permit to be able to cross and fly out of Amman. It was an exhausting phase and the arduous support of the CISEPO administration was a very big help.

Before my arrival in Toronto, CISEPO thoughtfully sent me a group photo of the program participants because my visa did not arrive in time for the first day of the IPEME sessions. To begin my acquaintance with the 2015 group, their names were listed on the photo I received. This gave me the chance to know each and everyone one of them. Despite being 3 days late to the program, I was able to get to know the participants and it was amusing to see their faces when I would recognize them and call them by their names.

During the IPEME sessions, emergency department night shifts, social activities and field trips, I was able to learn beyond what I was expecting. The classroom sessions were very helpful in understanding Pediatrics Emergency. It was an honor to encounter so many successful professionals and to hear them talk about their experience, motivation and what they have to offer. Nightshifts at Sick Kids hospital were very different from the hospitals back home. It was a great way to learn about Canadian Emergency Medicine guidelines. Unfortunately, I would not be able to apply them back home due to scarcity of resources available at our hospitals in Gaza.

I believe being exposed to so many successful people during the program and even during social activities was an empowering experience. Furthermore, I learned about the challenges every person had to overcome because of their backgrounds; this made me feel stronger and more ready to face mine!

I highly enjoyed the Toronto television studio tour and the Synagogue visit. I remember some of the participants went to China town on a Sunday afternoon and I wasn't able to go with them, as I was still tired from a previous shift. I will put that on my list for our reunion meeting one day!

I believe as a future physician and as a person who is in love with diversity, that I have a responsibility towards my future patients and future encounters. I have a responsibility to understand them and speak in a language that they will comprehend to deepen my bond with them. I have a personal interest in learning various languages, cultures and religions of our world. The sessions afforded by the IPEME program were extremely helpful towards my goals as a physician. Other social and cultural activities organized by CISEPO were likewise great ways in exchanging ideas and different interests (besides health and medicine).

I believe the success of the IPEME program was bringing different people from various backgrounds and striking a good balance between academic and cultural/social activities which formed an atmosphere of comfort that would lead to lasting friendships.

I found Toronto as a perfect location for this program. It set an example of diversity and coexistence for the IPEME participants. Exploring Canada's finest city was an astonishingly enriching experience. Walking in downtown and hearing all the different languages, trying to identify various races and cultures even heightened my experience.

I will not forget what Dr Arnold Noyek (Founder of the CISEPO organization) said when he addressed the group at his session with the group: “we as health professionals should be pro everyone; we should listen to everyone and find the basic bond that connects us all as humans and work through that.” The strong commitment of the donors, the CISEPO-IPEME team, the IPEME faculty, the University of Toronto Visiting Electives office, the U of T Faculty of Medicine Dean’s office and the Hospital for Sick Children Emergency Department staff are all great examples of dedication, care and solidarity. This is what I took home with me as I boarded the plane to go back! A message for love and peace through the noblest profession!



The IPEME 2015 Group and the CISEPO Team with Dean Howard Hu after his exhortatory speech

First row: Dr Shawna Novak, CISEPO Director, Hama Baqaeen, Jimin Lee, Yara Jeries, Dr Arnold Noyek-CISEPO Founding Director, Dr Howard Hu, Dean, Dalla Lana School of Public Health-University of Toronto, Mohammad Obeidallah, Inbal Golomb, Emaan A I-Jarrah, Tyson Savage.
Back row: Omar Shunnar, Nir Miller, Michelle Gold, Shaker Al-Azab, Mohammed Abu Zaanona, Rofael Jabr and Carmel Levin.

Right: CISEPO Founding Director Dr Arnold Noyek addressing the 2015 IPEME Group
Left: Dr Rahim Valani, IPEME Program Director-Curriculum and 2015 Master of Ceremonies



The 2015 IPEME group at Niagara Falls
Front Row: Nir Meller, Harpreet Gill (Resident), Michelle Gold, Liora Sherr (Volunteer), Mohammad Obeidallah, Emaan A I-Jarrah;
Second Row: Rofael Jabr, Tyson Savage, Mohammed Abu Zaanona, Jimin Lee, Carmel Levin, Hama Baqaeen, Inbal Golomb, Yara Jeries, Omar Shunnar;
Standing at the back: Shaker Al-Azab