

New Tzu Chi Clinic in Istanbul for Refugees

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
Thursday, 02 June 2016 15:44



The Tzu Chi Foundation has established a free clinic for Syrian refugees in the Turkish city of Istanbul. It has received more than 10,000 patients in its first three months of operations.

Turkey has accepted over 2.7 million refugees from Syria, the largest of any country in the world. They have access free of charge to public hospitals but cannot speak Turkish, making it impossible for the staff to treat them. Because many refugees had asked Tzu Chi for help, in response, the foundation started last year to plan a clinic in the Sultangazi district of Istanbul, which is home to 36,000 Syrian refugees. For them, life in a foreign country is extremely difficult; what they fear most is to fall ill.

After a year of preparation, the foundation opened the free clinic in March this year, with six departments – family, dental, eye, internal and pediatric medicine and gynecology. Since then, the clinic has received more than 10,000 patients.

Volunteer Hu Guang-zhong said: “Syrian refugees do not have to pay when they go to public hospitals in Turkey. However, there is a language barrier, so when doctors see the refugees, there is a little they can do to give them medical treatment or understand their condition. Thus, treatment is often delayed. We’ve met many families who ask us to help them find a hospital or free clinic that could provide them treatment.”

The new clinic has been warmly welcomed by the refugees. The number seeking treatment has continued to increase. Within less than three months, more than 10,000 people have come. One of them, Mohammed, said: “a pregnant woman must spend each month 100 Turkish lira (33.71USD). Each month they must have an ultra-sound scan and ensure they are taking the right medicine. Here they are saved from these expenses. The clinic provides many services to these women.”

In the free clinic, the Syrian doctors, who also are refugees, are able to work as doctors again and help their fellow countrymen. “Many patients go to public hospitals, but because of the language barrier, local doctors refuse to see them. But when they come here, we are able to help them.” Said Dr. Abdul Jawad, a doctor of Tzu Chi free clinic center in Turkey.

Zhou Ru-yi, a volunteer in Turkey, said: “there was a boy in the fourth year of school who suddenly felt a pain in his stomach. He did not know the cause, nor did his parents. So they brought the boy here for an examination. Only after it did they find a cyst on his liver. They went very quickly to a big hospital to have it treated. After that, we have every day had 30-50 children coming regularly to the clinic for health checks.”

Now several hundred Syrian refugees are coming to the clinic every day. This centre in Turkey has become a place both to protect their health and also to put their hearts at ease.