

# Sun, Sand and Squints

Derek Ho<sup>1</sup>

**Derek talks to Clare Roberts, a consultant paediatric ophthalmologist and Medical Director of Moorfields Eye Hospital Dubai about working in the United Arab Emirates.**

## **Can you tell us about your experience in working abroad, and why did you choose to work in Dubai?**

Moorfields Dubai is my fourth opportunity to work outside of the UK. The first was a medical school elective in Sabah, Malaysia in 1991. In 2000, during specialist training, I had 6 months Out of Program Experience in Cape Town which I spent primarily in Paediatric ophthalmology and strabismus. Later, after a fellowship in Moorfields Eye Hospital London and a few years consultant experience in the UK, I spent 3 years working in a strabismus clinic in Madrid. Dubai came up as a great opportunity for me in 2010. I am half of a two career couple and we both had openings in UAE simultaneously which was a stroke of good fortune for us both to progress our careers.

## **What is your day-to-day work like as a paediatric ophthalmologist?**

My day to day work is principally in outpatient clinics and in eye theatre. In outpatients I see children from a few days old upwards with a wide variety of common and rare eye problems (from sticky eyes, squints and amblyopia to complex congenital malformations and inherited retinal dystrophy) and I manage adults with strabismus. In theatre my main work is strabismus surgery - adjusting extraocular muscles to improve eye alignment and binocular function.

## **Do you notice any cultural differences, having worked as a doctor in both UK and Dubai hospitals?**

The joy of working in different parts of the world is that you become a guest in their culture. The UAE has a very welcoming culture and its people have transformed their lives over two generations from a simple nomadic lifestyle to a modern high tech one. They have strong values of courtesy and respect for family. The majority of our patients are Muslim so it is obviously important to respect their customs in the way we dress and talk and in our body language. I am not an Arabic speaker so I work with an experienced translator.

## **Can you tell us about the Dubai Moorfields Eye Hospital? What kind of patients visit the hospital?**

Moorfields Eye Hospital Dubai has been open for 6 years. It is a beautiful modern hospital and is growing in number of ophthalmologists

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None



## BIOGRAPHY

Dr Clare Roberts was the Medical Director of Moorfields Eye Hospital Dubai which was set up 6 years ago by Moorfields Eye Hospital London to bring world class eye care to the Middle East. She joined the hospital in 2010 becoming Medical Director in 2013, before returning to the UK in 2014.

Dr Roberts studied medicine at both Cambridge and Oxford Universities. She trained in ophthalmology at Southampton Eye Unit, moving to Moorfields in London to complete her training with a fellowship in Strabismus and Paediatric Ophthalmology with John Lee and Gillian Adams.

and services it can offer. We have specialists in retinal surgery, strabismus, oculoplastics, refractive surgery, glaucoma, paediatric ophthalmology and medical retina. Its aim is to offer world class comprehensive eye care and support education and research in the area. About 50% of our patients are Emirati, the rest coming from almost all corners of the world (UAE is a country of 8 million only 1 million of whom are Emirati in origin).

### **Other than treating patients in the hospital, what other services does Dubai Moorfields provide?**

Moorfields has undertaken the screening of young pupils in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, in conjunction with local schools. Moorfields has also treated several young patients through our collaboration with the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF), providing vital medical care for serious eye conditions. Moorfields has also extended its services to include teaching and research, in addition to treating patients. For example, we host professional scientific conferences such as a recent one on diabetic eye disease in Dubai in March, which attracted more than 170 medical professionals from the UAE's public and private sectors, as well as training session for Dubai school nurses.

### **How does this overseas branch of Moorfields Eye Hospital London benefit the NHS and Dubai population?**

Moorfields Dubai is wholly owned by Moorfields Private, and like Moorfields Private and Moorfields Pharmaceuticals the profits that are made are ploughed into Moorfields to improve services for UK patients. The people of Dubai and other cities of the UAE benefit by being able to access world class eye care without having to travel outside of UAE. For eye diseases continuity of care is often very important so accessing it local to where you live has huge benefits compared to uprooting your family and travelling half way across the globe. There has previously been a lack of high quality medical care here but this is improving all the time with a combination of well trained doctors from abroad and more doctors being trained locally. ■