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New Recruits

By Daniel Avihai-Kremer



Prof. Shmuel Shapira with the first class of student-soldiers

THIS past fall, 50 young, bright, highly motivated Israeli soldiers joined the Hebrew University. The first recruits to a rigorous new program at the Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Medicine, they are training to be physicians in the broad spectrum of medical practice known as “military medicine”.

While the demanding six-year program follows the School’s basic curriculum, the student-soldiers will also be trained extensively in such specialties as disaster and terror medicine, crisis management, medical ethics and leadership, military occupational medicine, diving and flight medicine, and public and mental health.

A seventh year will be spent in hospital internships.

The military medicine track represents a “unique partnership” between the Hebrew University and the Hadassah Medical Organization on the one hand and the Ministry of Defense and the Israel Defense Force on the other, says Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Professor

Eran Leitersdorf. “It is our response to a national priority of ensuring that the IDF has the full complement of physicians.” Indeed, the program will “provide expert manpower to fill leadership positions — in both military and civilian medicine — in clinical practice, research and administration in the decades to come,” says program director Professor Shmuel Shapira. Alongside their MD studies, almost half of the students will be able to pursue a master’s degree in any field

at the University and 12 outstanding students will be able to pursue doctorates.

Overall, the students have taken on a basic 12-year commitment. They completed their basic training before starting their studies and will continue their military training while studying, including attending the IDF Officers School and the Medical Corps paramedic course. On completion of their studies and internships, they will serve as battalion medical officers for three years, with two additional years elsewhere in the Medical Corps. “They will have been trained to respond to all possible scenarios a military physician

may face, from day-to-day duties to emergency situations,” says Prof. Leitersdorf.

The program’s recruitment effort is hands-on, with new recruits drawn from a cross-section of Israeli society. High-school students from the country’s periphery are the primary

target population, followed by graduates of the various pre-army preparatory institutes and young people from Israel’s center. A smaller percentage of places are reserved for applicants currently serving in the IDF or who recently completed their compulsory service.

During their studies, the students are actively encouraged to pursue a broad educational experience by taking Cornerstones courses in other disciplines at the University, through the medical humanities course at the Wilbush Patient-Centered Medical Forum (see pages 8-10) and via an extracurricular program of lectures and tours that enhances their understanding of Jerusalem, Zionism and aspects of Israeli society. The perfect recipe, it seems, for each class to provide the IDF — and Israel — with 50 top-notch, socially aware and culturally adept medical professionals. ■

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Faculty Dean Prof. Eran Leitersdorf at the inauguration of the military medicine program



Sasson Thran