

Challenges of children amputees in Gaza

Abdullah Al Shami¹ and Abdulqadir J Nashwan^{2,3}

¹AMC Therapy, Paediatrics Outpatient Department, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar (Correspondence to Abdullah Al Shami: aalshami@hamad.qa). ²Nursing and Midwifery Research Department, Hamad Medical Corporation, Doha, Qatar. ³Department of Public Health, College of Health Sciences, QU Health, Qatar University, Doha, Qatar.

Keywords: health care, amputees, children, Gaza

Citation: Al Shami A, Nashwan AJ. Challenges of children amputees in Gaza. *East Mediterr Health J.* 2025;31(4):233–234. <https://doi.org/10.26719/2025.31.4.233>.

Received: 05/09/2024; Accepted: 25/03/2025

Copyright © Authors 2025; Licensee: World Health Organization. EMHJ is an open-access journal. This paper is available under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo>).

Gaza faces severe overcrowding, scarcity of goods and services, and blockades, and is significantly isolated from the other parts of the world (1). Intermittent conflicts and attacks have exacerbated the condition in Gaza and the October 2023 war has inflicted a devastating damage. The relentless airstrikes and rocket attacks have not only led to tragic loss of lives but have also critically damaged Gaza's healthcare infrastructure, resulting in severe shortages of beds, equipment and medications even in hospital settings (2).

The October 2023 war has caused an estimated 45 361 deaths and 107 803 injuries (4), and the impact of the conflict on Gaza's population, particularly the children, has been catastrophic. Innocent children have been caught in the crossfire and have become victims of traumatic injuries, resulting in limb amputations. These young survivors now face profound physical, emotional and psychological challenges in a community already burdened by the impact of conflicts (3).

More than 10 children in Gaza lose one or both legs each day, and over 1000 have lost limbs since the current conflict began in October 2023 (5). Limb loss has profound physical, emotional and social consequences (3). Physically, individuals who have lost a limb may experience phantom limb pain, neuromas and other complications. Emotionally, adjusting to life with amputation can be overwhelming, leading to grief, depression, anxiety, and loss of self-esteem. Socially, children with amputated limbs may face stigma, discrimination and significant barriers to participation in daily activities (3). The impact of limb loss extends beyond the individual, it profoundly affects their families and communities. Families play a crucial role in the care and support of amputees, and in the context of war, these challenges are amplified because of the damaged health care facilities and limited access to essential services (6).

Comprehensive treatment for limb loss requires a multidisciplinary approach that supports the individual and their family members. The approach should include access to essential equipment, medications, prostheses, rehabilitation services, psychosocial support, and continuous follow-up care (7) (Figure 1). Gaza lacks specialized services and expertise needed to address

the complex needs of individuals with limb loss. The conflict, blockade, movement restrictions, and limited transportation options further exacerbate the challenges, resulting in delays or barriers to timely medical care.

In response to the crisis, the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) established the Gaza Amputee Project in 2019 to provide surgery, treatment and prostheses for child amputees (8). However, there are gaps in service provision. To alleviate the burden on families and promote the wellbeing of individuals affected by limb loss in Gaza, there is a critical need for services that are tailored to the unique needs of children amputees, including access to surgical interventions, prosthetic fittings, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support. These will facilitate physical and emotional recovery.

Telemedicine will be vital for health care providers and amputees in Gaza because it will enable virtual consultations, follow-up care and remote monitoring of rehabilitation progress. Mobile services will also be helpful in addressing access issues. Individuals who cannot access traditional health care centres due to conflict-related barriers can be reached through mobile clinics or outreaches.

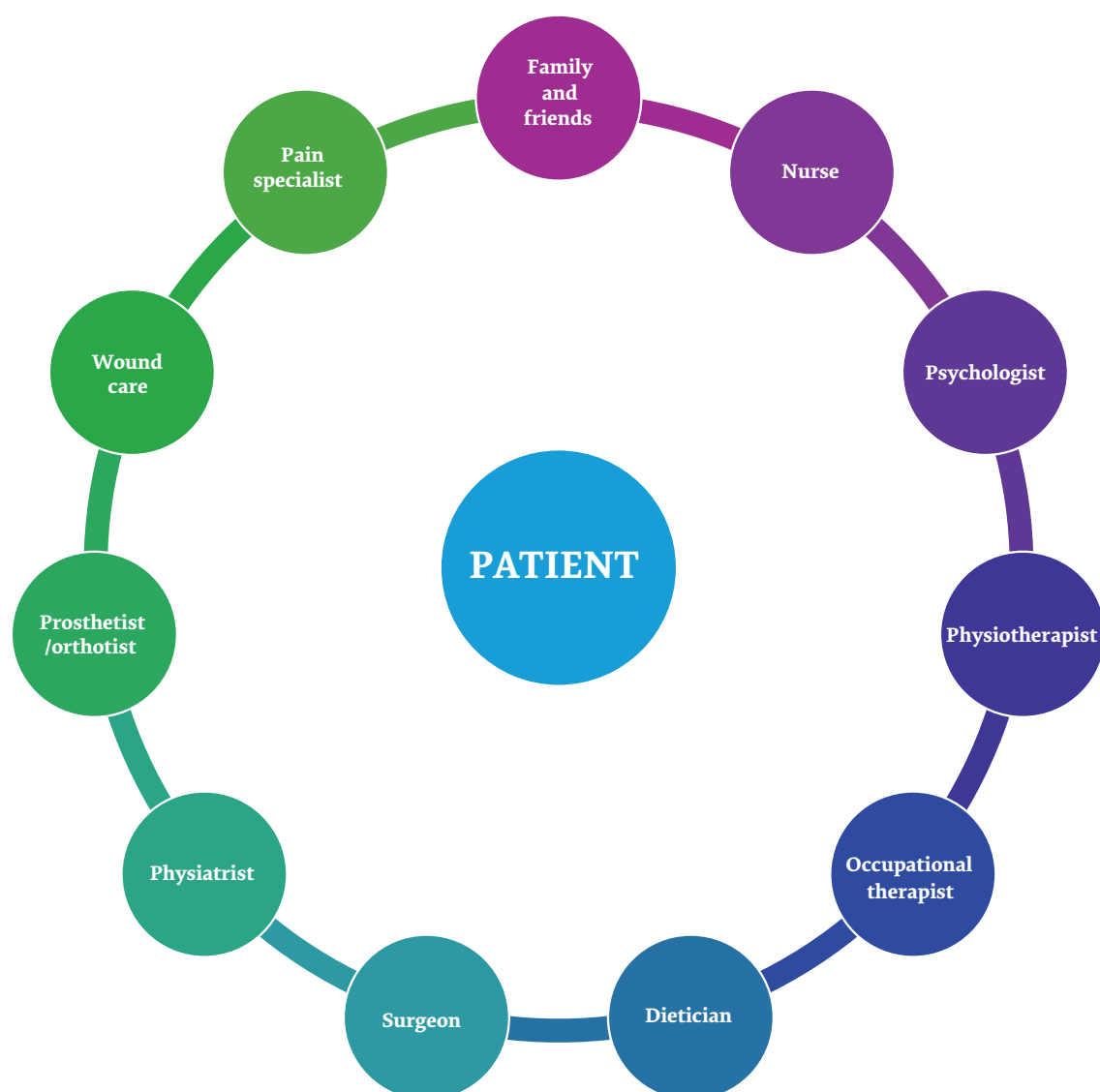
Long-term rehabilitation is essential for the physical, emotional and social recovery of children amputees and to ensure that such children live a better life, and this requires funding support, expertise and access to modern rehabilitation technology. Investing in the training of health care professionals, including surgical, rehabilitation and mental health specialists, is crucial to ensure that there is adequate skill and expertise to provide quality care for children amputees in Gaza and similar conflict settings.

Children who have lost limbs in Gaza need urgent help for specialized care, rehabilitation and support that will help them cope with the associated challenges. The onus is on the international community to rally the needed support that will give these children hope for a better future.

Funding: None.

Conflict of interest: None declared.

Figure 1. Multidisciplinary team for comprehensive treatment of limb loss



References

1. Wispelwey B, Jamei YA. The great march of return: Lessons from Gaza on mass resistance and mental health. *Health Hum Rights* 2020;22(1):179–185. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7348434/>.
2. Ahmed SK. Addressing the effects of war on Gaza's healthcare system. *Cureus* 2023;15(12):e50036. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.50036>.
3. Amtmann D, Morgan SJ, Kim J, Hafner B J. Health-related profiles of people with lower limb loss. *Arch Phy Med Rehab*. 2015;96(8):1474–1483. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2015.03.024>.
4. Kurmelovs R, Gadzo M, Adler N, Jamal U, Mohamed E. Updates: Israel kills 23 in Gaza, trades blame with Hamas over truce delay. *Al Jazeera*, 25 December 2024. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/12/25/live-christians-in-gaza-pray-for-an-end-to-israels-death-and-destruction>.
5. UNICEF. (2023- dec-19). 'Ten weeks of hell' for children in Gaza. *Peace and Security*, 19 December 2023. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/12/1144927>.
6. Mitchell S, Andrews L, Engward H. Examining the effects of acquired limb loss on the family network: A grounded theory study. *Disab Rehab*. 2022;44(5):745–753. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2020.1780480>.
7. Keszler MS, Wright KS, Miranda A, et al. Multidisciplinary amputation team management of individuals with limb loss. *Curr Phys Med Rehabil Rep*. 2020;8:118–126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40141-020-00282-4>.
8. Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Gaza amputee project. Palestine Children's Relief Fund, n.d. <https://www.pcrf.net/gaza-amputee-project>.