

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Trust surgeon fits artificial limbs from plastic drainpipes to amputees of war torn Syria**

A surgeon from Russells Hall Hospital has returned from war-torn Syria where he has been fitting artificial limbs made from plastic drain pipes to lower limb amputees

The Dudley Group's orthopaedic surgeon Mr Viquar Qurashi, an orthopaedic surgeon for The Dudley Group, and a team of doctors spent ten days in a refugee camp in Reyhanli close to the Turkish Syrian border, moulding prosthetic limbs and rubber feet for more than 114 amputees.

Helped by a team of six technicians from Pakistan, Mr Qurashi worked in a makeshift clinic and work shop helping men, women and children who lost limbs during the two-year war that has so far claimed 70,000 lives.

A Turkish businessman has donated the drainpipes which are melted down at high heat in an oven and moulded against a plaster of paris cast of the amputated leg. They are then fitted into place with metal pins and leather straps. The artificial feet are made from recycled rubber.

"The limbs made from drainpipes are not as sophisticated as a western limb but a prosthetic limb costing up to a £1,000 here in Britain will be of little use to someone who doesn't have the money, technology and tools to maintain it," said Mr Qurashi.

"We can make limbs from drainpipe material for £30 and provide them free to those in need."

Mr Qurashi, who sits on the Associate Parliamentary Limb Loss Group, and had his prosthesis tested for endurance here in England by the world renowned research and technology centre SATRA, has fitted more than 3,000 limbs over the past seven years to amputees in his home country of Pakistan.

He travelled to Syria at the request of the Syrian British Medical Society and two Syrian colleagues at Russells Hall Hospital.

"All I need to fit prosthetic limbs are pipes, plaster of paris, nuts and bolts – and rubber to create feet," added Mr Qurashi. "A group of ten volunteers and training technicians from Syria have been selected to take up this job in future."

In 2005, Mr Qurashi set up the Naya Qadam Trust, non-profit organisation of volunteer overseas Pakistani doctors, which helps fund the artificial limb materials.

He hopes to take the limbs to other countries such as Haiti, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Vietnam.

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For more information, please call Jackie Dietrich, Communications Manager for The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, on (01384) 456111 extension 3403.