ALPHA OMEGA 2018
INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION REPORT

By Tal Evenhaim Pinhas, The Hebrew University-Hadassah School of Dental Medicine
founded by the Alpha Omega Fraternity

My name is Tal Evenhaim Pinhas, I live in Jerusalem and I am a sixth-year dental student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the president of the Alpha Omega Jerusalem student chapter. I started my involvement with Alpha Omega during my fifth-year of dental school as vice president and quickly learned how AO was an excellent way for me to get involved and meet amazing people. I worked hard to make the Jerusalem chapter active and initiated several projects.

This year, thanks to the help of Alpha Omega London Charitable Trust, The Alpha Omega International Dental Fraternity, and The Hebrew University - Hadassah School of Dental Medicine, I had the opportunity of a lifetime, to travel to the AO 2018 international convention in New Orleans and see how Alpha Omega influences dentistry across many countries. I was honored to take part in this convention as not only did I learn so much, but I also met wonderful mentors, students, and friends. I feel proud for the opportunity to be a part of the Alpha Omega international family.

After a long 17 hour flight from Tel Aviv, I arrived at New Orleans on December 26, 2018. From the airport, I took the direct shuttle to the convention’s hotel. My first impression from the city was magical, since every part of it was decorated for the holidays. I was very lucky to be roommates with Elyssa Schlossberg, a 3rd year dental student from the University of Southern California. We contacted each other by e-mails before the convention, and both of us were very excited to finally meet each other and share our dental studies experiences. The convention gave me the chance to bond with other dental students from Elyssa’s faculty and other dental faculties from Canada, Mexico and the USA that were attending the convention. It was very nice to discover that as dental students, we have a lot in common, both personally and professionally. It turned out that New Orleans was a first time experience for most of the students attending the convention. During the convention’s welcome reception, I was very excited to hold the Israel flag, as the Israeli and Hadassah representative.
Throughout the convention, I attended all the educational sessions, held by professional dentists from all over the world. The educational session encompassed each dental profession, and enriched my knowledge. I was exposed to very interesting and revolutionary innovations of the dental world. I learned about digital dentures from Dr. Israel Finger, a revolutionary technique for dentures, which has not been used in Israel, and the use of lasers on periodontics and endodontics treatments from Profs. Ayala and Adam Stabholz. I received a comprehensive answer from Dr. Lisa Germain about the daily conundrum, which I also face as a student, regarding Endodontics vs. Implants. I was exposed to the Opioid crisis in the USA, which increased my awareness of controlling the prescriptions for patients. Moreover, I was captivated by the lecture of Dr. Wendy Shultz Spektor about aesthetics restorations and DMG products, which are not yet common in Israel.

Alongside the professional sessions, I attended enriching lectures on developing one's personal skills and human relations by Mr. Steve Anderson, choosing the right career path and career management by Mr. Keith Drayer, and the importance of running a LinkedIn page by Ms. Heidi Weber.

A special daily event held during the convention was the "Hospitality Time", a unique and pleasant event that brought together senior doctors, young doctors and students. It enabled an open dialogue on both personal and professional aspects of our lives. Another privilege I had was the "Mentoring Time", in which other students and myself were able to meet and converse with senior doctors. Since my dream has always been to become an oral surgeon, I was honored to meet and speak with Dr. Jamie Feldman, a former oral and maxillofacial surgeon, about my future dental career and he gave me the encouragement to continue to follow my dream. Afterwards, Dr. Feldman shared with me his incredible photos of his photography hobby of capturing unique moments of life.

In our free time, I had the opportunity to discover the beauty of the city and to travel with my new friends at the French Quarter and the Garden District, eating the famous beignet, and watching street theater performances, as well as visiting jazz clubs and hearing excellent jazz music played by talented musicians. There was also a unique AO Parade, which was very fun and special experience. We also had a special Shabbat dinner, with a pleasant and warm family feeling. Finally, we celebrated New Year's Eve together at a special dinner and later went out together to watch the breath taking fireworks show.
The peak of the convention for me was the amazing opportunity I was given to present the dental assistant community project I have been leading in Jerusalem - “Give’n’Smile”, in front of senior doctors and AO delegates. During my first year of dental school, I initiated a volunteering project that has been operating for six years. The project provides free dental treatment for patients in drug and alcohol rehabilitation, youth in distress, abused women, and holocaust survivors. During the clinics project, fifth- and sixth-year students provide dental treatment under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Alon Livni, and other dental students attend as assistants. Doctors and students of our dental school take part in this project voluntarily. As the project leader, my ambition is to increase the number of people who receive aid in this project, as there is a big need for those who cannot afford proper dental care. My hope is to reduce their pain and restore their smile.

The 2018 New Orleans Alpha Omega Convention was a lifetime experience that I am extremely thankful to have been a part of and hope in my future dental career I will participate in many more Alpha Omega conventions.

Special thanks to the below who made my participation possible:

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