

# THE Bridge

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STATEN ISLAND  
UNIVERSITY  
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## HOSPITAL PROVIDES FREE MEDICAL CARE TO LEBANESE CHILDREN



*Dr. Nicolas Zouain, center, introduces two Lebanese children who were treated here by hospital doctors. From left are Badih Habre and his daughter, Rodina, and Leila Haikal holding her son, Houssam.*

Rodina Badih Habre, one of two Lebanese children who travelled to the United States for medical treatment, returned home March 26 following plastic surgery to help restore skin on her legs that were burned badly in a house fire in 1998. The 12 year old, who arrived in America March 8, was accompanied by her father, a construction worker.

The surgery, performed by **Armen Kasabian, M.D.**, director of plastic surgery at Staten Island University Hospital, removed substantial scar tissue from her legs, caused by third-degree burns she had suffered. It was her seventh surgery to repair the fire's damage, six of which had been performed in her home Lebanon. The reconstructive surgery repaired two large extended scars. When her body matures, in 2 to 3 years, she is expected to return for further reconstructive surgery.

Also being treated for a vascular disorder is three-year-old Houssam Haikal. He is accompanied by his mother. Houssam was born with a rare syndrome, an arteriovenous malformation in his leg, which, if left untreated, could cause cardiac failure, perhaps before he reached his teen years. After undergoing a series of tests, including an angiogram, Houssam is scheduled for surgery to be performed by **Thomas Panetta, M.D.**, the hospital's director of vascular surgery.



The healing journey was arranged by **Nicolas Zouain, M.D.**, who is a third-year medical resident at University Hospital, and a native of Lebanon. The New York based Forum Children's Foundation sponsored the children, arranging for their visas and transportation. Complimentary round-trip air transportation was provided by both Middle East Air and American Airlines

The hospital and its physicians provided medical care without charge, including the surgeries, the techniques and technologies of which are more advanced in this country. Housing for the patients and their parents was provided at the hospital's patient lodging facility.

The hospital acknowledges its role in providing medical care in an increasingly compact global community. Through several of its medical programs, University Hospital treats patients from many of the states, and at least 30 different nations. Most recently, the hospital has cared for patients from Vietnam and from Sierra Leone.

Also participating in the care for the children are the hospital's anesthesiology department, the burn center, the department of pediatrics, and **Arthur Buonaspina, M.D.**, who has overseen general pediatric care of the youngsters.