

Hospital salvages support for Iraq

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GATHERING help for overseas ... Highfield Hospital physiotherapist Joanne McDonnell and consultant knee surgeon Ahmed Hegab with some of the crutches they have collected to send to Iraq. OB421104

WAR-torn Iraq is to benefit from hospital equipment from Rochdale thanks to the efforts of the Highfield Hospital.

The private hospital collected unwanted and unused crutches and medicine trolleys destined for the rubbish tip.

And the first shipment was sent last week to Iraqi hospitals, which are in desperate need of life-saving equipment.

Ahmed Hegab, a consultant knee surgeon and physiotherapist Joanne McDonnell have been working in collaboration with the charity, Human Relief Foundation, to collect medical equipment donated by other hospitals.

by Beatriz Ayala

Together with Riah Alhamdani, a retired surgeon at Rochdale Infirmary, they are hoping to send regular shipments of medical equipment to Iraq and other needy countries.

Mr Hegab said: "Some of my patients were returning crutches and I wondered what happened to the items once they were handed back.

"When I found out they would be thrown away, I thought the best way of utilising them was to send them to people and countries who needed them.

"Each hospital has their own policy for disposing of items, so I contacted Ms

McDonnell and she said there were always plenty of crutches to be sent and found out there were two medicine trolleys to collect as well."

Mr Hegab contacted Mr Alhamdani, who had worked with the Human Relief Foundation for a year, as well as other doctors throughout Greater Manchester who were collecting items.

Mr Alhamdani, who worked in Iraq during the Iraq-Iran war, said: "The hospital has sent crutches and trolleys but we need lots of other items such as prosthetic limbs, second hand bed linen and smaller items.

"There isn't much in the way of equipment in the hos-

pitals in Iraq and we've seen films brought back from there which show even gauze and linen dressings are not available.

"We were told some hospitals were having to ask patients to bring in their own mattresses because they did not have any. We've had a great response from manufacturers but need to keep the pressure on and send more items out."

Mr Hegab said: "To feel you're helping somebody in need is a great feeling and it makes you appreciate what we have in Rochdale."

To donate items or for more information on the Human Relief Foundation call 0161 882 0535 or 0161 438 0446.