



From left to right-Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau, Ashdod Emergency Medical Centre's Chairman of the Board of Trustees; Professor Saul Shasha, Director of West Galilee Hospital in Nahariya; and Dr. Abraham Ofek, the medical centre's Project Manager.

Ashdod to get new medical centre

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ONE of Israel's least medically equipped cities is to have its own emergency medical centre. Senior Israeli Medical Professionals, Politicians & Rabbinical leaders have joined forces to launch the facility in Ashdod, in response to an imminent medical crisis in the bustling port city.

During the past decade, Ashdod has transformed itself into Israel's fifth largest city based on a huge influx of new immigrants from the former Soviet Union, North Africa, Ethiopia and most recently, France. Ashdod is also home to the country's second largest port facility (after Haifa), as well as sensitive IDF military installations and many other industries, including hi-tech.

However, Israel's political bureaucracy has torpedoed repeated efforts to fund the construction of a full service hospital in the region, which has jeopardized the lives of nearly 230,000 citizens. Unlike most central and northern Israeli cities, which possess a variety of full service hospital facilities, Ashdod remarkably has none. On average, it takes at least 40 minutes

and often longer by car especially during rush hour, to arrive at the nearest hospitals to the south and west of Ashdod.

Refuah V'Yeshuah, an Israeli non-profit organization has marshalled the support of top business, medical, political and rabbinical leaders in order to create the Centre, a 160,000 sq. ft. state-of-the-art emergency medical complex that could provide the community with a wide range of vital medical services.

Last week, the project's Board of Directors, Trustees and Management Team formally met for the first time in a cordial atmosphere to discuss the facility's accelerated building programme. Among the Rabbinical names behind the scheme are Rabbi Yisroel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Jaffa (former Chief Rabbi of Israel), and Agudas Yisroel MK Rabbi Yaakov Litzman.

Rabbi Lau was emphatic about what the Ashdod Emergency Medical Centre means to him and the entire region. "This is the first time I was ever asked to be directly involved with such a project, which I see as nothing less than a holy mission. I am honoured to be a part of it. We're talking about preserving the sanctity of life," Rabbi Lau stressed.