



**Melissa Mitchell  
with children at the  
refugee camp**



**By Brian de  
Francesca**

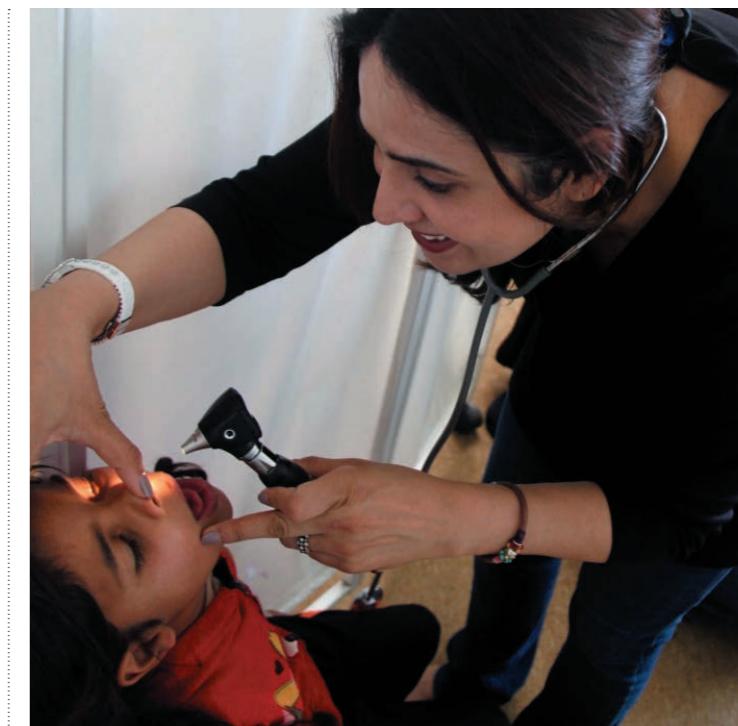
Brian is an international expert in the use of digitalization and connectivity to improve all aspects of healthcare. He speaks and writes regularly on a wide range of topics including: telemedicine, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, bio-sensors, and many more interrelated and innovative digital topics that are changing the face of medicine world-wide.

# “The greatest humanitarian aid initiative in history”

**Whilst volunteering in a refugee camp, Brian de Francesca’s mission became clear; to use telemedicine, AI, and blockchain to help 65 million global refugees**



As an educated, white, American male – I am very privileged. I try to not take this for granted; but at times I do, which is wrong. For years, ‘The world experience’ has been fed to me via television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and now through various digital and social media forms. Years ago, I watched the Gulf War on a silenced television in a jazz club in Baltimore; hurricanes and earthquakes were brought to me in the same way that Star Wars and Homer Simpson arrived – digitally and numb. Like



**“You do not really understand, until you breathe their need”**

Star Wars, elves and mythical bridge trolls – the plight of the world’s refugees was as real as a sitcom to me – I am not proud to admit that. I read about refugees, saw the UNHCR posts on Facebook and elsewhere; I saw, but was not deeply touched to my soul by these stories and images, because I was numb to them. I had become emotionally desensitized by the media over the years since my childhood. Numb, after seeing so many fake deaths, fake space ships, fake futures and pasts, fake trauma, fake loves, fake realities - I had become numb to all that was fed to me via the media; I believe that most of us have become equally numb to some extent.

Then, my friend Tasnim invited me to join her and her sister Alya (both wonderfully blessed and gifted physicians) to go to a refugee camp – to support a programme organized by a true Warrior Angel – Melissa Mitchell.

That trip – changed my life for the better, forever and eventually gave birth to what may be the most significant humanitarian aid project in history.

As soon as my feet left the warmth and cleanliness of the van and landed on the mud and rock surface of the camp, my reality shifted. My past concepts of camps and tents were of Boy Scouts having fun adventures. The flimsy plastic shacks these families lived in were in no way ‘fun’ and daily survival is their adventure. There are no toilets, no refrigerators, no WIFI, and no wood. Why is wood important? Because in the winter, it gets very cold and with no wood available for fires – the refugees tend to burn plastic and rubber to keep warm – which fills their tents with toxic gases – giving many of them serious respiratory conditions. While the young children, most of whom have not been to a school in years, appeared somewhat oblivious to the dire nature of their reality; their parents were not.

When I looked into their eyes, all I saw was a solid blackness – a complete loss of hope. Their reality hit me like a freight train at full speed – this was real, sad and not acceptable in any way at all. My guide Jamal summed it up simply, “You do not really understand, until you breathe their need.” And I had, and it burned scars in my lungs. I was very far

from numb to their pain and plight. My task on this mission, was to organize the uncountable number of children into a sensible flow towards the doctors. The medical duo worked around the clock without taking a break to eat, or even go to the bathroom – true super heroes.

There was a young girl who had a horrible rash across her forehead and face – the family said she has had it for months and that it was very painful and constantly itching. Neither of the doctors on our team was a dermatologist; and just then it hit me – I got out my mobile phone, confirmed that I had a solid connection (I later found out that most camps do) and with the parent’s permission, I took a picture of the rash and messaged it to a dermatologist on my company’s telemedicine network.



# Refugees



Melissa Mitchell with children at the refugee camp

Within 20 minutes, I found out what the rash was and that it could be completely cleared up in a couple weeks – with an inexpensive ointment that was available locally. That night, we bought the cream in town and today, her face is pretty and smiling. And that is when my purpose and mission became crystal clear to me – as if a calling from the clouds. I must connect all 700 of the world's refugee camps to remote medical specialists.

The work started long before I got involved. The NGO Tying Vines coordinates getting modular clinics into camps, set up and staffed; we now intend to tele-connect these modular clinics to the Ver2 healthcare and education platform, from where doctors anywhere in the world can provide tele-consultations for the patients in the camps; and there is so much more we can do. Last year, with the support of European tech company IRYO an electronic health record for refugees was created and launched. We are already in the process of reviewing various Artificial Intelligence applications that can assist with triage and diagnosis as well

## "What is lacking is centralized coordination of the patients"

There are over 65 million displaced persons around the world. Their need is significant, very real – and sadly will not soon go away. This situation is caused by self-interested people that I have no control over; so, I will do my small part in helping those that I can. Connecting 700 refugee camps to remote healthcare services is an enormous undertaking; a noble one – and an achievable one. This work has given great meaning and purpose to my life – but I need help and a lot of it. Please contact me at any time, if you want to get involved and support in any way.

*May peace be with you.*

For further information,  
please contact Brian de Francesca.  
Email: bdefrancesca@ver2digimed.com  
Tel: +971.52.841.1501



Mother and child at the refugee camp.  
Credit: Melissa Mitchell



**ONE OF THE LEADING INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS FOR THE DIGITAL FUTURE**

***Your partner for connected health***

OuluHealth, a novel ecosystem based in Finland, provides a one-of-a-kind environment for boosting the health and life science business. The ecosystem strengthens open collaboration between experts from health and social care, the natural sciences, information technology, academia and business.

- Number 1 in digital health
- Three testbeds that are equipped with cutting-edge pilot facilities for developing new health solutions (OuluHealth Labs)
- 1st 5G hospital in the world
- Most advanced patient data integration
- Among the best innovation & technology cities
- One of the 13 Smartest Places on Earth

### World-class competence in:

- Medical imaging
- Robotics
- Printed electronics
- Artificial intelligence
- 5G/6G- technology

**OuluHealth is looking for new partners for global cooperation.**

Meet us at Arab Health at the Z1B50 stand to learn about Finnish health innovations.

**JOIN US IN CREATING THE FUTURE HEALTH!**

**www.ouluhealth.fi**

For further information, please contact:

Joanna Seppänen | Email: joanna.seppanen@businessoulu.com | Tel: +358 40 6416937