It is really a pleasure and honor to stand here and address you, SHARPIES of the year 2015.

I remember exactly two years ago, I was sitting at your places on the first day of the SHARP summer course and I was very anxious and worried, for 2 reasons: first, I knew ahead of time that the SHARP schedule is intensive and tough, and it was going to take at least half of my summer; Second, I was a recently graduating Endocrinologist and I was afraid that involvement in research projects would jeopardize my clinical skills. However, I decided to go for it and to consider the SHARP course “the challenge of my 2013 summer”. Few weeks thereafter, anxiety was converted into enthusiasm; I was very happy that within such a relatively short period of time, I have tackles essential topics in clinical research, such as Biomedical Ethics, Epidemiology and Biostatistics. I was very eager to apply what I have learnt in the projects that we had to submit for the sake of the Summer certificate.

Given this personal satisfaction and these achievements, I was glad to be enrolled in the Maters Program. Here, upon the completion of each course, I was more and more convinced that what I was doing was right, and that this was a great opportunity for me to mold and shape my clinical practice. I became aware of the burden of Non Communicable Diseases, locally and worldwide, and that these diseases are now targeted by international initiatives, lead by the WHO. I learnt how Clinical Guidelines are prepared and which ones to trust. I was involved in policies, at the national level, and I knew, how me, as a clinician, I can influence and impress policy makers. Even my literature search for any disease or any treatment strategy became systematic and complete. And while reading any medical paper, now I am able to criticize it and to select the ones that are suitable for my practice and work for the best of my patients.

Indeed, the SHARP program helped me establish a balanced and powerful developmental network, with Seniors, Peers and Juniors. Indeed, the senior instructors and especially my mentor, Dr El Hajj Fuleihan, helped me excel and advance in my academic career; my peers, Dr Maya Barake and Dr Karine Feghali, who were my colleagues in my 2-year Master’s Program, with whom I have collaborated on several projects.. we used to share ideas and help each other in solving problems ... I was confident enough to have Juniors with me, who helped me in my projects; I was proud of myself to teach them and share with them what SHARP has taught me so far.

I acknowledge the major role that SHARP has played in changing my interests and my career track. Personally, I urge every clinician to sit for such a course, because now I strongly believe that research, academia and clinical practice are not independent but complementary.

In the end, I would like to wish the best of luck and success in your Summer Course.

Thank you

Marlene Chakhtoura, MD.