

AUB study highlights growing health inequality in Arab region

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Inequality in healthcare continues to grow in the Arab world, in spite of generally improving facilities, according to a leading regional health expert.

During the seminar, *Health in(equity) in Arab countries*, Professor Abdesslam Boutayeb, from the Faculty of Sciences at the University Mohammed I Oujda, Morocco, presented research conducted for AUB on what makes healthcare inequitable in Arab countries.

Addressing an audience on May 24, 2010, including members of AUB's Faculty of Health

Sciences and a visiting group of physicians from leading Iraqi universities, Boutayeb drew upon previous healthcare research.

“Even when we see an overall improvement in urban and rural health issues, inequity remains high between different geographic regions within each country,” he explained. “The rich may be improving the general health status of the country, but the poor are still suffering.”

Boutayeb pointed to social determinants such as economics, politics, geography, gender inequality, ethnic differences, life expectancies, and education as reasons why some people enjoyed better healthcare than others.

Having spent the past five years studying the mathematical modeling of diseases, assessing the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases and health equity and human development, Boutayeb purposely included unanswered questions in his draft, allowing for suggestions by the audience.

“It's difficult to get work published in international journals,” he explained. “So I wanted the audience to give me recommendations for improving my paper to avoid [negative] remarks by potential publishers later on.”

Professor Huda Zurayk, director of AUB's Center for Research and Population Health, for whom Boutayeb conducted his research, said the seminar tackled important issues.

“It's important for us to be able to interact as researchers and comment on such drafts in order to contribute to future research,” she said.

