

For Immediate Release



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Dr. Ghazi Zaatari, AUB, receives the prestigious World No Tobacco Day 2020 Award

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced its 2020 awardees in each of the six WHO regions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. Dr. Ghazi Zaatari, interim dean of the Faculty of Medicine at AUB, professor of pathology and laboratory medicine, has received the prestigious World No Tobacco Day 2020 Award as one of the Eastern Mediterranean Region winners. The award recognizes individuals or institutions based on their outstanding contribution to the advancement of the policies and measures contained in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its guidelines, particularly in relation to the theme of World No Tobacco Day.

“It is a great honor for the university and for Dr. Zaatari to have him recognized with the 2020 WHO No Tobacco Award. Dr. Zaatari is a distinguished and determined scholar, and an advocate for a tobacco-free tomorrow like few others,” said Dr. Fadlo Khuri, president of AUB. “In organizing the working group around the waterpipe, he has collaborated with stellar scholars from across the university, with the shared vision of making this deadly form of inhalational tobacco a thing of the past. Despite the tremendous efforts of our group, the waterpipe remains a major risk factor, increasing in utilization in Lebanese and Arab society. It is great scholar advocates like Dr. Zaatari and his colleagues including Drs. Alan Shihadeh, Najat Saliba, and others at AUB who will help make tomorrow safer for the youth.”

Dr. Zaatari is a distinguished pathologist renowned for his investigative work on tobacco control, tobacco product regulation, and health effects of tobacco products, including novel products. He is actively involved with the Geneva-based WHO Tobacco Free Initiative (currently No Tobacco Unit), and its Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation (TobReg). In 2008, he was appointed by the WHO director general as chair of this study group, a position he continues to hold to date.

He also serves on the Executive Committee of the Tobacco Laboratory Network (TobLabNet), which establishes standard operating procedures and validates testing for chemicals and toxicants in the contents and emissions of a variety of tobacco products. The work of TobReg has culminated in publishing several WHO Technical Reports on Tobacco Product Regulation, manuals such as The Basics of Tobacco Product Regulation and Building Laboratory Testing Capacity, and advisories such as Advisory on Waterpipe Smoking, Advisory on Global Nicotine Reduction Strategy, Advisory on Banning Menthol in Tobacco Products, and Smokeless Tobacco and Public Health: A Global Perspective. The latter was completed in collaboration with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CD), National Cancer Institute (NCI), and WHO. These references are used globally by countries interested in tobacco product regulations based on scientific evidence and data.

In 2015, Dr. Zaatari was selected by WHO Convention Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to serve on a seven-member expert team to conduct a global impact assessment of FCTC ten years after its adoption as an international treaty to control worldwide tobacco use. He was instrumental in bringing the FCTC Conference of Parties to make a landmark decision on regulating waterpipe smoking. In 2016 and under his joint initiative with Dr. Vera De Costa E. Silva, the Head of the Convention Secretariat of FCTC, AUB, represented by President Fadlo Khuri, signed a memorandum of understanding to have AUB designated as a global Knowledge Hub (KH) for Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking. At present, Dr. Zaatari serves as its director.

Dr. Zaatari has a strong passion for tobacco control and over the years he has participated in several civil society activities and served as an expert and speaker on tobacco control and tobacco product regulations at numerous regional and international meetings and congresses.

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Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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