

## AUB Celebrates the World Sickle Cell Awareness Day

**Beirut, June 22 2020:** To observe World Sickle Cell Awareness Day, the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) in collaboration with the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America (SCDAA) and the Sickle Cell Support Fund at AUB shed light on the disease through a virtual community gathering on the night of June 19, 2020 at 8:00 pm.

In line of the global theme of this year, “Shine the Light on Sickle Cell Disease”, College Hall was lit up in red in the presence of AUB President, Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, Interim Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dr. Ghazi Zaatari, Director of the Sickle Cell Disease Program, Dr. Miguel Abboud, president of the Sickle Cell Disease (SDC) fund, Mrs. Marwa Khouzami Awad and members of the fund. Different speeches were given for the occasion to reflect on the importance of raising awareness about the disease and managing treatment. Two patients also provided their testimonies about the lifestyle they had to adhere to in order to cope with the disease and manage its symptoms. To show solidarity with sickle cell disease patients, several of the attendees wore red outfits, red masks and held red candles. The theme this year is also mask up for Sickle Cell Disease to encourage protection of the vulnerable patients. The event was livestreamed on AUB and AUBMC’s Facebook and you tube channels allowing community members to take part in the event remotely for the purpose of respecting social distancing measures.

SDC is a genetic disease that affects hemoglobin, the molecule in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells throughout the body. It has severe consequences on the patient’s life at all levels and touches patients of all races. More than 100 million people around the world are affected by SDC and are faced with physical, psychological, and social consequences that also impact their family. There are severe effects on the health and quality of life of the patients and they will need continuous and good medical care to be able to lead a decent life. “It is an important public health issue globally, and luckily new therapies have very recently become available that could change the patients’ quality of life,” said Dr. Abboud.

In Lebanon, there are over 700 people living with SCD. The Sickle Cell Program at AUBMC is currently providing multidisciplinary care for around 300 patients. Most patients – including hundreds of children – come from families with limited resources and no medical insurance making them unable to receive the regular blood transfusions, tests, close follow-up, and hospital care they urgently need. The SDC fund at AUBMC covers the comprehensive care provided for needy sickle cell patients who visit the clinic and contributes, with the program team, to raising awareness on the disease.

The United Nations has assigned June 19<sup>th</sup> as the World Sickle Cell Awareness Day and it takes place all around the world. AUBMC has been actively participating and gathering the community around this event on a yearly basis. As a leader in healthcare, AUBMC has always

been at the forefront of tapping into public health issues in order to raise awareness, grant patients the accessibility to care, and help enhance the quality of life of all its patients. This initiative attests to AUBMC's governance and excellence in science and medicine while still being an advocate for the community at large.

- ENDS -

#### **About AUBMC**

Since 1902, AUBMC has been providing the highest standards of care to patients across Lebanon and the region. It is also the teaching hospital for the Faculty of Medicine at AUB (established in 1867), which has trained generations of medical students and physicians, and whose graduates can be found at leading institutions around the world. AUBMC is the only medical institution in the Middle East to have earned the five international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, CAP, ACGME-I and JACIE attesting to its superior standards in patient-centered care, nursing, pathology/laboratory services and graduate medical education.

The Faculty of Medicine has graduated over 4,000 medical students and physicians; the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing provides excellent education for the nursing staff, and the Medical Center meets the healthcare needs of over 360,000 patient visits annually.

**For more information please visit our website [www.aubmc.org](http://www.aubmc.org) or contact:**

**The AUBMC Office of Communications at 0096 1 350000 ext. 4732 –**

Email: [praubmc@aub.edu.lb](mailto:praubmc@aub.edu.lb)

**Memac Ogilvy Public Relations at**

**Papou Rmeily - 01-486065 ext.135 [papou.rmeily@ogilvy.com](mailto:papou.rmeily@ogilvy.com)**

**Rolande El Ghusayni - 01-486065 ext. 261 [rolande.elghusayni@ogilvy.com](mailto:rolande.elghusayni@ogilvy.com)**