

For Immediate Release



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AUBMC Launches the First-of-its-Kind Cancer Support Fund in Lebanon:

A charitable initiative that benefits adult patients diagnosed with cancer

The American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) organized a press conference to launch the first-of-its-kind Cancer Support Fund in Lebanon, a charitable initiative that supports adult needy patients diagnosed with cancer.

The launching conference was held on March 20, 2018 in the presence of H.E. Ghassan Hasbani, the Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health and Zahi El Haiby, Director of the Minister's Office representing H.E. Pierre Bou Assi, the Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs, along with Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri, AUB President, Dr. Ziyad Ghazzal, Deputy Executive Vice President/Dean Interim Medical Center Director and Chief Medical Officer representing Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh, Executive Vice President for Medicine and Global Strategy, Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at AUB, Mrs. Hala Dahdah Abou Jaber, President and Founder of the Cancer Support Fund, Dr. Ali Taher, Director of the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute and co- founder of the Cancer Support Fund. In presence were several dignitaries and community members in addition to senior AUB and AUBMC faculty and staff.

The mission of the Cancer Support Fund is to offer financial and psychosocial support to adult needy cancer patients in their treatment while safeguarding all aspects of life. With the financial support the Fund will provide, adult needy cancer patients will have an equal opportunity to receive appropriate healthcare services. The fund also aims to raise awareness on cancer prevention and support advanced research.

H.E. Mr. Hasbani said: "We, at the Ministry of Public Health, support the great efforts that have yielded the launching of the Cancer Support Fund which will provide our community with a better chance of prevention, early screening, and treatment for many adult cancer patients. We are not surprised by the pioneering role of AUBMC in launching such unique initiatives in Lebanon. AUBMC has a long proven record in improving the health of its entire regional

community, particularly those that need it the most, in addition to advancing research, and in securing specialized expertise in various academic and medical fields.”

Dr. Fadlo Khuri delivered a speech saying: “Our experience equate that of the most comprehensive vision of cancer centers in the United States and Britain, which emphasizes research, treatment, and prevention of cancer. We attest to our world class research and treatments, and it is about time we move to an era of cancer prevention, which includes quitting smoking, following healthy habits such as exercise and nutritional interventions until we reach a stage of adopting a healthier diet.”

He added, “It gives me great pleasure to launch the Cancer Support Fund today which will facilitate cancer care, research, and prevention and make it accessible to the largest number of adult patients with cancer. I have devoted my entire career to fighting cancer especially when it affects the most vulnerable. This fund is but a simple reflection of my message in this life.”

Dr. Ghazzal said, “Survival is a fundamental right, and it is our responsibility to seek opportunities for achieving sustainable development. To maximize contributions, whether human or financial, we are committed and as part of our 2020 Vision, to expand strategic engagement and create a culture of knowledge-sharing. At the roots of our existence is the obligation to build trust in the community that affords us so much, and we are committed to making a difference by advocating the advancement of health through expanding investment to grow fundraising opportunities.”

Statistics about cancer incidence are rising in all countries; Middle East incidence is relatively higher than other countries, and this represents an increased burden on societies. According to the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health National Cancer Registry, cancer incidence in Lebanon has increased from 191 per 100,000 in 2003 to 270 per 100,000 in 2015. Many of these patients are underprivileged and face challenges in accessing advanced healthcare services that can lead to optimal outcome and increase survivorship rates.

On behalf of H.E. Pierre Bou Assi, Mr. Zahi El Haiby said: “We at the Ministry of Social Affairs appreciate the efforts of the American University of Beirut Medical Center in creating new opportunities to care for cancer patients. We emphasize that our role is key in providing psychosocial support to adult patients and their families. We also value partnership with the public and the private sector, especially the prestigious institutions such as the American University of Beirut and its Medical Center. Awareness is the best treatment. We salute your main role with adults and your intervention, which works towards avoiding the effects of the disease and makes them more integrated in their immediate surroundings and in society.”

In her speech, Mrs. Abou Jaber noted: “We will work hand in hand with those in need to save a large segment of society that is suffering from this disease. It is our mission at the Cancer Support Fund to work, and under the umbrella and care of the American University of Beirut and

its futuristic vision, to bridge the gap and engulf cancer adult patients with the right treatment options.”

Dr. Taher concluded: “There is no doubt that there are negative environmental and genetic factors that cause cancer. Statistics show that cancer is increasing while human life expectancy is rising, and therefore covering the entire cost of cancer is a burden on the budgets of governments and countries that face economic difficulties. Although prices are becoming cheaper in several areas such as energy and land costs, the cost of health is on the rise, not only because of costly technology, but also because of the rapid spread of transitional and non-transitional diseases. Cancer is perhaps at the top of these diseases. Governments of many developed countries have borne the brunt of cost and spending on the health sector and have not been able to live up to their promise of decent health coverage.”

He added: “If this is what happens in developed countries, how can countries overcome economic problems? Hence, the importance of giving, donating, and connecting with solidarity. Whatever it is named, our goal is one: a patient struggling with dignity against a deadly disease that could not be overcome by science.

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,100 students. AUB currently offers more than 120 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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