

For Immediate Release



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For the First Time in the World, the Children’s Heart Center Team at AUBMC Implants Three Umbrella-like “Occlutech” Devices to Close Holes in a Child’s Heart

The Children’s Heart Center team at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) performed a cutting-edge procedure when they implanted three umbrella-like “Occlutech” devices delivered through catheterization to close three holes in a child’s heart without resorting to surgery. The operation was performed on a 12 year-old boy who has three Atrial Septal Defects (ASDs) with a dilated right sided heart.

The first of its kind procedure was performed by a team led by the Director of the Children’s Heart Center, Dr. Fadi Bitar, in addition to Pediatric Cardiologists Drs. Ziad Bulbul and Mariam Arabi, and Cardiothoracic Surgeon, Dr. Issam El Rassi in collaboration with Interventional and Structural Cardiologist, Dr. Fadi Sawaya, and Dr. Samar Taha from the Department of Anesthesiology.

The Director of the Children’s Heart Center said, “Without the efforts of our multi-disciplinary team, such original endeavor would not have been possible.” This achievement reiterates the Children’s Heart Center’s prominent role in presenting advanced development and providing high quality healthcare to children with congenital heart disease.

Professor Bitar asserted, “We are proud to pioneer such procedures in the world and reflect on our leading position in the region and beyond.”

Atrial septal defect, a hole in the wall between the atria (the upper chambers of the heart), is a common Congenital Heart Defect (CHD) and is amenable to trans-catheter closure. Commonly, one umbrella like device is utilized to close the hole through a special catheter technique procedure; in some cases, two devices are utilized to close multiple holes. The procedure held at

AUBMC is the first to be reported worldwide utilizing three Figulla® ASD Occluder (Occlutech) devices to close the holes in a child's heart. The patient was discharged from the Medical Center the next day following the procedure in excellent condition and will resume a normal life.

The Children's Heart Center at AUBMC, supported by the Brave Heart Fund is a leading center caring for congenital heart disease in Lebanon, the region and beyond. Its track record includes pioneering new procedures that are introduced to treat children with a variety of heart diseases including the successful performance of the first pediatric heart transplant in the Levant area. In addition, the Center continuously seeks to distinguish itself through its innovative research program which reported worldwide discoveries relating to the genetic causes of CHD.

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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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