

100 Iraqi medical emergency professionals participate in AUB training program

Monday, October 18, 2010

Six days of a series of training workshops for 100 Iraqi medical emergency professionals began today at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) in a bid to help the Iraqi Ministry of Health build the capacities of its medical staff.



The workshops were kicked off at a press conference held at the Regional External Program (REP) Conference Room. It was attended by Iraqi government and WHO officials, along with a European Commission representative, AUB President Peter Dorman, and senior university administrators as well as workshop participants.

President Dorman welcomed the audience, noting that AUB's relationship with Iraq goes back to the mid 1960's. He said that he looks forward to continuing working with dedicated and motivated Iraqis seeking to develop their professional abilities and enhance medical services in Iraq. "Our university benefits greatly from the presence of Iraqi professionals on campus," he said. "Greater representation of international learners on campus is essential to our efforts to provide the entire AUB community with the opportunity to experience the wealth of perspectives that such diversity brings."

Dr. Ghasib Ali, director general of Operation and Specialized Services at the Iraqi Ministry of Health, expressed the need for such trainings given the increasing number of Iraqi casualties due to violence and explosions. Voicing his optimism, he said that such programs present a harbinger of hope.

Hala Sharifi, program manager of the European Union (EU) delegation to Iraq, said the EU continuously supports the Iraqi people, noting that improving access to health services in Iraq and tending to the well-being of Iraqis is key for rebuilding their country.

EU support to Iraq from 2003 to the end of 2009 amounted to almost one billion Euros (€995 million), including 117 million Euros spent on the health sector. Most of this fund was channeled through the Iraq Trust Fund in the forms of projects implemented by the United Nations.

Omar Mekki, deputy head of the WHO-Iraq Office said that the strategic decision taken by the Iraqi government to strengthen emergency medical services to become the backbone of the emergency preparedness and response system is an important milestone in the process of modernizing the Iraqi health system. He also highlighted the importance of technical collaboration and partnership, noting that collaborative projects with AUB will be taking place until at least January 2011. "We cannot prevent disasters," he added, "but we are able to ensure that we are prepared when emergencies strike."

Also present were Hassan Diab, REP vice president, and George Farag, REP assistant vice president.

After the press conference, the participants headed to AUBMC to start a series of courses during six days of workshops, organized by REP as part of the European-Union-funded project "Support to Specialized Medical Services in Iraq," whose main focus is improving quality, access, and utilization of emergency and blood transfusion services in Iraq. The workshops will create a core group of trainers and facilitators in the following areas of emergency medicine:

- Advanced Trauma Life Support
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support
- Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support
- Advanced Pediatric Life Support

Approximately 100 Iraqi medical professionals are participating in the workshops, which will incorporate adult learning pedagogy and material specifically tailored to the technical medical skills that are in need. This material includes 22 printed manuals. Participants will acquire the necessary knowledge and expertise to facilitate and lead similar training workshops at the national level.

Hassan Diab (REP VP) said the Iraq Emergency Medical Services Capacity Building Program exemplifies AUB's commitment to serve the peoples of the Middle East and beyond through continuing education and training services. He pointed out that in only the past two years AUB has provided professional training to hundreds of Iraqis in topics ranging from business management to radiation oncology. "We look forward to continuing engaging with dedicated and motivated Iraqis seeking to develop their professional ability and that of their country," he added.

The workshops will be concluded on Saturday, October 23, 2010, with an emergency simulation, which will be followed by the distribution of AUB's Continuing Education Center (CEC) certificates.

Examples of AUB's training effort for Iraq abound. The Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) had been actively collaborating with the United Nations Population Fund and the Iraqi Ministry of Health to implement a project on adolescents and youth-friendly health services in Iraq. Phase I of this program was completed in March 2010.

In spring 2008, AUBMC carried out a training workshop on emergency medical services and life support programs for some 60 nurses and paramedics working in emergency services in Iraq. In the same year, REP and the US State Department carried out a program aimed at helping displaced Iraqi professionals in Lebanon find jobs.

Earlier, in February 2005, and in partnership with the University of Hawaii, AUB hosted in West Hall some 70 Iraqi academics from the University of Mosul and the University of Dohuk for a four-day workshop aimed at revitalizing Iraq's higher education in agriculture.