Prevalence of Dementia in Lebanon

Project Title
Prevalence of dementia in Lebanon, a pilot study in Beirut and Nabatieh: Validation of the 10/66 Dementia Research Group diagnostic instrument for dementia in Arabic

Research Team
Principal Investigator: Monique Chaaya
Co-Principal Investigator: Gunhild Waldemar (Danish Dementia Research Center, Denmark)
Co-Investigators: Samir Atweh, Lilian Ghandour
Project Coordinator: Kieu Phung
Collaborator: Martin Prince (leader of 10/66 Dementia Research Group, Kings’ College London, UK)

Research Question
What is the discriminating power of the 10/66 DRG diagnostic instrument for dementia in an Arabic speaking population?
What is the prevalence of dementia in Lebanon?

Research Timeline
2011-2013

Summary
Validated screening and assessment instruments for dementia in Arabic are totally lacking, hampering the development of epidemiological, behavioral, social, and clinical research in Arabic speaking populations. The 10/66 Dementia Research Group (www.alz.co.uk/1066) has developed and validated a culture- and education-fair diagnostic instrument well suited to the older population in Lebanon that has a high rate of illiteracy. The aim of the study is to validate the 10/66 diagnostic instrument in Arabic.
To achieve this aim, 150 participants older than 65 years with mild to moderate dementia are being recruited from outpatient clinics at AUB and 150 age-, gender-, and education-matched controls are being recruited through community groups. Two trained interviewers blinded to the cognitive status of the participants, administer the 10/66 diagnostic test to the 300 participants and interview their caregivers. The sensitivity and specificity of the 10/66 dementia diagnostic algorithm will be calculated. Once the 10/66 diagnostic instrument is shown to have good discriminating power in diagnosing dementia in an Arabic speaking population, a population-based study will be carried out to estimate the prevalence of dementia among those older than 65 in Lebanon. The sample size is 2500 persons older than 65, randomly selected from all governorates of Lebanon. The targeted number of study participants in each governorate is proportional to the percentage of people older than 65 living the governorate. For the pilot study in the governorates of Beirut and Nabatieh, the targeted number is 492 persons. In every village and city, systematic sampling of households will be done, where every fourth household from a randomly chosen starting point will be selected. The interviewers will administer the 10/66 diagnostic test to the participant and interview their caregivers. In addition, using questionnaires, the interviewers will inquire about risk and protective factors for dementia as well as barriers to diagnosis and care for people with dementia, and the burden on their caregivers.

Funding Source
National Institute of Health

Contact
Monique Chaaya
Kieu Phung
Social Inequalities in Health

Project title
Social Inequalities in Health: The Ras Beirut Well Being Survey

Research team
Principal Investigator: Afamia Kaddour
Co-Principal Investigators: Sawsan Abdulrahim, Cynthia Myntti, Nisreen Salti, Livia Wick, Huda Zurayk
Collaborators: Nancy Krieger, France Lert, Maria Melchior

Overall objectives and specific aims
The overall objective of the Ras Beirut Well-Being Survey is to enrich analyses of poverty and inequality issues as applied to public health, in a socially and economically diverse neighborhood of Beirut, Lebanon.

The specific aims of the survey are the following:
1- To describe the socio-economic profile of the residents of Ras Beirut.
2- To conceptualize absolute deprivation as the lack of economic as well as political resources at the individual and neighborhood levels.
3- To contest the notion of relative deprivation as based on social comparison and resulting only in individual feelings of envy, frustration and resentment.
4- To examine an alternative concept – the sense of injustice – as a reaction to individual and collective experiences of deprivation.
5- Informed by the ecosocial theory of disease, to identify the mechanisms and pathways through which the sense of injustice affects health.

Research Timeline
2009-2012

Summary
What explains social inequalities in health? Answers to this simple yet profound question promise new insights for policy and action.

In recent years public health researchers have devoted new energy to answering this question through the lens of deprivation. “Absolute deprivation”, generally defined as the measurable lack of economic resources, has long been the focus of those interested in the political economy of health, and recently enriched in the ecosocial theory of health. The concept of “relative deprivation”, generally defined as individually experienced resentment, envy or frustration, has also gained currency in recent years. With roots in the disciplines of social psychology, economics and sociology, proponents of relative deprivation argue that health outcomes are also influenced by social comparison, not just by objective measures of inequality.

This research project examines the social determinants of health in Ras Beirut, a socially and economically heterogeneous neighborhood of the capital of Lebanon, where it is possible to find deprivation and affluence juxtaposed. No current social, demographic or health data exist for Ras Beirut. Once described as a middle class district, anecdotal evidence now suggests that Ras Beirut, like the rest of Lebanon, is experiencing widening income gaps and concomitant disparities in well-being. The Ras Beirut Well-Being Survey will therefore produce quantitative and qualitative evidence to document and explain social inequalities in health.

This project is implemented by the newly established “Social Inequalities in Health Working Group”, a multidisciplinary research group at CRPH.
Funding sources
Ford Foundation, LNCSR (The Lebanese National Council for Scientific Research), the CRPH, the RHWG (The Reproductive Health Working Group), and the CCECS (the Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service at AUB).

Contact
Afamia Kaddour
Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Working Group

Project title
Behaviors, perceptions and attitudes of youth in Lebanon on sexuality

Research team
Principal Investigator (PI): Professor Lilian Ghandour
Co-PIs: Dr. Fayyal El-Kak & Professor Loulou Kobeissi
Research Assistant: Rola Yasmine

Study Objectives
The main descriptive objective of the study is to describe the patterns of sexual behavior, perceptions, and attitudes of young people (aged 18-30) attending private and public universities in Lebanon. Other more analytical research questions will be formulated to examine more closely the influences of students’ demographic profile, attitude, and perceptions on their sexual behaviors. In all cases, potential gender differences will be examined.

Research Timeline
November 2011 – December 2012

Summary
Today in Lebanon youth between the ages of 14 and 24 represent 17.9% of the entire population. Reproductive and sexual health (RSH) research in the late 90s identified that Lebanese youth are exposed to high-risk behaviors such as unsafe sexual practices, leading to unplanned pregnancies, STIs, abortions, among others. Despite changing social, cultural and moral norms, reproductive and sexual health research in Lebanon (and the MENA region) remains scant. One study in 2005 focusing on knowledge and practices regarding contraception, underscored the importance of examining youth sexuality and sexual health in Lebanon by showing that about 75% of males and 25% of females admitted to ever having sexual relations (intercourse and outcourse patterns); moreover, 22% of the total sample (48% of males, 7% of females) reported vaginal penetrative intercourse. Besides STIs, early sexual practices, particularly risky and unprotected behaviors, have been associated with other risky behaviors such as substance use, multiple sexual partners, accidental loss of hymen and unintended pregnancies.

Currently, school and university students are not systematically and regularly taught about sexuality and health, contraception, and STI prevention, which adds to the deficient sexual health culture in Lebanon. The incidence of HIV is increasing yearly in Lebanon although the country still has a low level threat of the HIV epidemic. A report issued in 2009 by EMRO-WHO, estimated that by 2008 there were 2,900 people living with HIV in Lebanon. In 2009 the Lebanese MOPH’s declared that 43% of the prevalent cases of HIV in Lebanon occurred via sexual activity. A main reason for low figures of STIs in Lebanon is due to under-reporting and lack of STIs registry. In addition, antibiotics can be purchased without a prescription and patients are apt to self-treat; however unlike bacterial infections viral infections cannot be cured and there has been an increasing incidence rates of Hepatitis B (208 new cases in 2009), Hepatitis C, and HPV. The present study aims to undertake a cross-sectional nationwide study on private and public university students to help establish baseline estimates of patterns of sexual behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes of youth in Lebanon. Gender differences will be explored. The ten largest universities will be surveyed, covering approximately 85.96% (n=149,390) of the total university population in Lebanon. This will be made possible by using a highly secured online survey method (LimeSurvey) via AUB Academic Computer Center (ACC) servers. The research proposal is currently under review by the American University of Beirut Institutional Review Board (IRB).
Funding source
Ford Foundation

Contact
Lilian Ghandour Abiad
Faysal El Kak
Tobacco Control (TC)

Project title
Supporting tobacco control research and dissemination

Research team
Project Leader: Professor Rima Nakkash
Research Assistants: Taghreed El Hajj; Joanna Khalil
Advisor: Dr. Norbert Hirschhorn

Collaborating Team
Rami Khoury, Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs
Ghazi Zaatari, Chairman of the WHO BREG Committee, Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Department
Alan Shehadeh, Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering Department
Najat Saliba, Associate Professor, Chemistry Department
Rima Afifi, Associate Professor, Health Behavior and Education Department
Monique Chaaya, Associate Professor, Abla Sibai, Professor and Ziyad Mahfoud, Assistant Professor at the Epidemiology and Biostatistics Department

Research question
To maintain the generation of tobacco control research and the translation of its findings into policy.
To contribute to building knowledge and public support for tobacco control policy in Lebanon at the local level.
To develop common agenda’s and research priorities across researchers in the region at the regional level.

Research Timeline
October 2009-2011

Summary
This project focuses on dissemination and translation of research to policy as well as building a regional network of researchers involved in tobacco control and more specifically waterpipe tobacco use. At the local level, the grant will serve to translate research findings and disseminate them to influence public policy. Dissemination of findings will catalyze the tobacco control policy debate and contribute towards potentially moving it to the forefront of the national agenda. At the regional level, AUBTCRG has a very good working relationship with researchers in the region who are involved in conducting tobacco control research, particularly regarding the waterpipe. Supporting the initiation and coordination of such a network will enrich the research process and ensure that production of research evidence builds on previous findings. The interdisciplinary nature of the network members will enrich discussions and promote joint future research projects.

Funding source
IDRC- RITC

Contact
Rima Nakkash
AUB-Tobacco Control Working Group