

Dear Colleagues, Students, Parents and friends:

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program's First Multimedia Bioethics Festival.

Bioethics issues are issues that we cannot afford to brush aside any longer. They are part of the lives of the public, not only the clinician or the scientist.

When policy makers meet to legislate the permissibility of aborting a fetus with malformations that are incompatible with life; when scientists experiment on stem cells in the hope of curing Alzheimer's and ponder the possibility of cloning animals or humans (for therapeutic or reproductive purposes); when researchers contemplate genetic enhancement; when physicians consider the right to artificial hydration and nutrition or decide when to stop treating a patient deemed medically futile; when lawyers deal with medical errors; etc.... we are entering the realm of the human writ large.

After all, these are matters ABOUT the people and the people have the right to be enlightened, empowered and involved. No scientist, researcher, healthcare professional, lawyer, policy maker, or other is morally justified in making decisions about people while afar on Mount Olympus. Such decisions will be exercises in futility as they do not involve the living who will be affected by them.

The role of the media cannot be overestimated. The media, in its diverse forms, is today the most powerful tool which, not only informs the public of what is happening, but shapes public opinion on matters that are of paramount importance.

Having said that, it becomes clear that media and bioethics need to join forces to inform and empower as well as to allow those concerned to be partners in the decision making process on matters that affect their health, well-being and future.

This Bioethics Multimedia Festival incarnates this joint power. It is the first of its kind in the entire Arab Region, and perhaps even internationally. While these projects are the product of hard work, research, and dedication on behalf of AUBFM med III students as part of their *Physicians, Patient and Society* course, their extended purpose, as I am sure you can now tell, goes beyond: these projects are a statement that the role of the healthcare professional extends beyond the borders of the clinic and the hospital. This makes this festival the first targeted initiative to disseminate bioethics in the Arab World community in an attempt at educating and empowering individuals for we are all involved and affected by such thorny bioethics issues, although the nature, magnitude, kind, and degree of that effect might vary according to each person.

What you will see today are the top 10 projects covering issues like Pediatric clinical trials, competition in medical schools, patients non-compliance, breaking bad news, teaching hospitals, cryopreservation of embryos, hymenoplasty and several bioethical scenarios on research, transplants, etc. Yet, I have to take this opportunity to congratulate other groups for wonderful productions. Time is limited and we cannot show all.

I would also like to thank the ACPS team, particularly Mr. Hossein Hamam, Mrs. Rana Haddad, Miss Rayan Fayed and Miss Rana el Ghazzi for helping us in making this happen.

With these projects we announce an additional mission that SHBPP AUBFM set for itself: **To ENTERTAIN, To ENGAGE, To EMPOWER.**

Fasten your seat belts and enjoy the show!