

The Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine and Medical Center holds its 7th Regional Conference "Medical Malpractice, Errors and Disclosure"



The Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program at the American University of Beirut, Faculty of Medicine and Medical Center in joint providership with Cleveland Clinic held its 7th Regional conference entitled "Medical Malpractice, Errors and Disclosure" on Saturday, January 31, 2015 at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Beirut. The conference brought together physicians, residents, allied health professionals, risk managers, lawyers and policy makers from Lebanon and the Arab region to discuss ethical issues in medical malpractice, errors and disclosure.

The conference included a series of presentations by Dr. Thalia Arawi, Founding Director of the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics & Professionalism Program and Clinical Bioethicist at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine and Medical Center, Dr. Haavi Morreim, Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, Maitre Charles Ghafari, lawyer of the Lebanese Order of Physicians, Dr. Fadi El-Jardali, Associate Professor, Department of Health Management and Policy, Faculty of Health Sciences, AUB, Dr. Salah Zeineldine, Assistant Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Dr. Adnan Tahir, Medical Center Director and Chief Medical Officer, and Dr. Mondher Letaief, Technical Officer, Department of Health System Development, WHO-EMRO. They introduced to the audience the ethical, psycho-social, legal and medical perspectives of dealing with medical errors with patients and the public, the key needs that patients need in such instances, challenges and strategies to improve patient safety, culture, and practice and shed light on the present medical practices in Lebanon and the region.

Representing Vice President of Medical Affairs and Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at AUB Mohamad Sayegh, Associate Dean for Medical Education Dr. Kamal Badr highlighted the significance of the workshop for discussing the magnitude of medical malpractice, its impact on patient safety and ways to avoid it. Dr. Thalia Arawi followed with a presentation entitled "The Practice of Medicine Is an Art" in which she emphasized the role played by the physician to make use of moral wisdom and phronesis when adverse patient outcomes arise and the importance of aligning the hidden and informal curricula with the formal one. She also suggested the establishment of a national forum for doctors to disclose and share medical expertise.

In his presentation, Dr. Fadi El-Jardali spoke about the need to create organizational and policy level support for improving patient safety noting that patient safety faces many challenges such as the difficulty in recognizing errors, the lack of an error identification system and the different concerns about liability. Dr. El-Jardali discussed several case studies from Lebanon and other countries in the region that show how patient safety culture -among others- is a major determinant in medical malpractice. He stated that organizations ought to protect patient safety through applying a system error approach, seeking

accreditation, giving incentives, and enhancing their value based purchasing.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Morreim, explained that after harm occurs, the patient, his family and members of the healthcare team all have the same needs which include understanding what has happened, seeking quality improvement to avoid future errors, reconciliation and fair compensation. Further, Dr. Morreim explained two different approaches – the “system based analysis approach” and the “communication and resolution” approach – to minimize errors, provide quality care and help physicians provide excellent care.

Maitre Ghafari elaborated on the ethical and legal aspects of medical errors in Lebanon. He gave an overview of the Lebanese Code of Medical Ethics and the current rectifications made to it. He described the role of the Lebanese Order of Physicians (LOP) in following up on malpractice.

Dr. Salah Zeineldine gave a lecture on the responsibility and liability of trainees in medical errors. He mentioned examples of medical trainees’ errors and their legal and ethical repercussions on the hospital and involved medical team. Dr. Zeineldine highlighted that in order to responsibly care for patients and minimize harm, some measures should be taken. These should include reducing sleep deprivation and duty hours, recognizing the impaired physician, and disclosing errors.

Dr. Adnan Tahir gave a lecture on developing safety metrics and improving error reporting. He identified methods to effectively target, review, and reduce errors. He explained how the workflow process within a hospital could be improved using an error reduction model.

Dr. Letaief shared with the audience some statistics and facts on adverse events and medical malpractice from the EMRO. He then described some of the regulatory mechanisms - such as open disclosure, public reporting, quality assurance and litigation - used in addressing medical malpractice. He stressed the importance of finding equilibrium to ensure patient safety while protecting the medical profession. Dr. Letaief concluded by saying that patient safety and quality of care are highly variable across the region, yet they all require systematic effort and regulatory approaches to prevent medical malpractice.

Dr. Morreim concluded: “in the US, all what it really took is one courageous institution to lead the way, and I see the makings of a very courageous institution (which) has already begun to lead the way.”

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