

# AUBMC and UNESCO holds the First Regional Conference for BiNWIAR Network in Beirut

A network to enhance the well-being of women's health in the Arab World

March 20, 2014 Beirut, Lebanon

In order to enhance the well-being of women in the Arab world regarding their health care, medical treatment and research, UNESCO's Cairo Office and several experts from the region including the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), initiated the "Bioethics Network on women's issues in the Arab region (BiNWIAR)" in 2011.

"BiNWIAR is a network of individuals and institutions established to plan activities and share information and experience to seek solutions from ethical perspectives for the problems women in the Arab World are facing related to health care, treatment and research," said Mrs. Orio Ikebe, program specialist at the Social and Human Sciences Department at the UNESCO Cairo Office.

In February 2014, the first Regional Conference of the Network and its advisory board's first meeting was held in Beirut titled "Bioethics Issue for Women: Ethics of reproductive health – social and political conditions in Arab countries." The conference organized by the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program is considered to be the first regional activity of the Network after the establishment of the advisory board including institutions and researchers from various parts of the Arab region working on issues related to ethics and women's health in the region.

Dr. Thalia Arawi, Founding Director of the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine and AUBMC and member at BiNWIAR commented: "It is an honor to us to be able to hold the first BiNWIAR meeting in Lebanon. The network aims with its members, covering various specialties from the Arab World, to contribute to the welfare of women through exchange of information and joining the efforts among experts and organizations in the region. That would be through conducting research and workshops, provide policy advisory to the governments and support the activities of the members of the network."

A two days conference was organized highlighting topics that touched on the challenges to reproductive health needs in Algeria, ethical implications of socio-political conditions in Arab countries on research involving Arab women, future threats to Arab women's health, bioethical challenges in reproductive health care in the context of Lebanon and the region, reproductive health in occupied Palestinian territory: Ethical considerations, ethics of genetic testing and research in the Arab Region in relation to religious and cultural values and violence against women in Tunisia.

Deputy VP/Dean and Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs, Dr. Ziyad Ghazzal, representing Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Vice President of Medical Affairs, Dr. Mohamed Sayegh, asserted the historical leadership and pioneering role of the Faculty of Medicine in bioethics, with The Salim el Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program (SHBPP) the first of its kind in the region. "As part of our AUBMC 2020 Vision, we are committed to be advancing patient-centered care, education and research to heights that have never been seen before in our region. Bioethics is a critical part of this vision," stated Dr. Sayegh.

During the conference, experts from Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Tunisia gave presentations on challenges surrounding women with regard to reproductive health in their countries. On this occasion, the first advisory board meeting of the BiNWIAR was held as well in order to adopt a road map of the network to translate various issues identified during the conference into concrete actions. Membership to join the network is open to professionals and students.

Currently the network has over 100 individual and institutional members. UNESCO Cairo Office and the Regional Documentation and Information Center on Bioethics and Ethics of Science and Technology (RDIC-BEST) function as the secretariat of the network. In September 2013, the advisory board of the network was established and is composed of selected experts from each country in the Arab States.

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About AUBMC:

Since 1902, AUBMC has been providing the highest standards of care to patients across Lebanon and the region. It is also the teaching hospital for the Faculty of Medicine at AUB (established in 1867) which has trained generations of medical students and physicians, and its graduates can be found at leading institutions around the world. AUBMC is the first medical institution in the Middle East to have earned the three international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, and CAP, attesting to its superior standards in patient-centered care, nursing, and pathology/laboratory services.

The Faculty of Medicine has graduated over 4,000 medical students and physicians; the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing provides excellent education for the nursing staff, and the Medical Center meets the health care needs of over 300,000 patient visits annually.