

Dear Colleagues, guests, and friends.

Welcome to the 4th Regional Conference held by the SHBPP, this time around the theme of Bioethics in the Media. Allow me to begin by introducing to you the SHBPP at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine. This Program is an interdisciplinary resource for faculty, students, and healthcare providers who are involved in bioethics education, research, and consultation in Lebanon and the region. Launched in April 2010, it is the first targeted initiative in the Arab world that seeks to educate, research, and champion issues related to professionalism, medical humanism and bioethics. Thus, the SHBPP aims at enhancing public awareness and understanding as well as scholarly work on contemporary issues related to bioethics, humanism and professionalism. It promotes and encourages the development of the requisite skills, attitudes, and behaviors among those who practice medicine on issues such as end of life care, stem cell research, medical economics, health administration, law and policy, and ethics and research in Lebanon and the Arab World.

The theme of the conference today is a very timely one and this is so for at least two reasons:

First, 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.

Second, the role of the media, in its various forms, cannot be overestimated. The media is today the most powerful tool which, not only informs the public of what is happening, but a tool that 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 the public, empower them and make them partners in the decision making process on matters that affect their health and well being. Thus, you as journalists and media experts play the most important role in this century and the one to come. Several issues arise in that context. This is why I am very thankful to our international expert Dr. Arthur Caplan for joining us today to share his expertise on this topic and to Dr. Nabil Dajani, also an expert from our part of the world for finding the time from his busy schedule to join us today.

I wish us all a successful conference.