

Colleagues and friends,

First, I welcome you to our National Conference on *Organ donation, procurement and transplantation: Ethical Challenges and future directions* held by the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program in at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine collaboration with The Division of Nephrology and Hypertension also at AUBFM.

This program is an interdisciplinary resource for faculty, students, and healthcare providers who are involved in bioethics education, research, or consultation in Lebanon and the region. Launched in April 2010, it is the first targeted initiative in the Arab world that strives to educate, research, and champion issues related to professionalism and bioethics. Thus, the SHBPP aims at enhancing public awareness and understanding as well as scholarly work on contemporary issues related to bioethics 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. It supports education, research, and community outreach-focused on AUB in particular, but including also Lebanon and the region.

On the face of it, there seems to be little reason to question the ethics behind transplanting organs. Indeed with the advancement of modern surgery, and now stem cell research, thousands of people are given a new lease on life through the selfless altruism of others who choose to find hope in the midst of misfortune, by literally giving of their own bodies in an attempt to save others. Yet, right under the surface lurks a quagmire of ethical dilemmas and controversies which have threatened to undermine the entire practice of transplanting organs. These problems have only grown in scope as new medical advances have been made in recent years. What are the sources of organs used in transplantation? What can we do to ensure that the procurement system is more efficient? Should we pay for organs? Should someone who has already received one transplant be permitted a second? Should alcoholics or smokers be given transplants? These are only some questions that we ponder on.

I hope this conference will allow us to discuss, from an ethical point of view, the twin questions of procurement and distribution which lie at the heart of most of the issues.

I wish us the best of luck and a fruitful and enjoyable conference.