

Colleagues and friends,

First, I welcome you to our Second Regional Biomedical Ethics Conference held by the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program 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, 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.

Research that involves human subjects or participants raises unique and complex ethical, legal, social and political issues, to mention but a few. It will be naïve to claim that we can cover and discuss all the complex issues that might arise from these in two days. However, we are proud to say that just as science, medicine and art have started with the Arabs, we would like to see research ethics develop from within the Arab circles as well. This is one of the main aims of this conference which unites the minds of different professionals from different regions of the neighboring Arab world with the kind cooperation of our colleagues from the West. We are going through a time of profound change in our understanding of ethics as it is applied to research. As rapid developments in technology leave traces on our history, we cannot but keep in mind a number of key phrases that describe the system of ethical protection that the contemporary social and medical research establishments have created to try to better safeguard the rights of their research participants. Some key principles resonate: The principle of voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, autonomy, and justice. All these are there not as principles that stand alone but as principles to be respected and applied for the service of humanity. We Arabs have always been the pioneers in many fields, it is my belief that nothing stands in our way to be pioneers in bioethics as well, particularly now that the Salim El-Hoss

Bioethics and Professionalism Program is dedicated to founding the first Arab Bioethics Society. I wish us all the best of luck and enjoy the conference!

Having said that, allow me to begin this conference by thanking a friend and colleague who has had a great impact on medical ethics, and research ethics in Lebanon.

Maitre Charles Ghafari is currently the legal counsel of the Lebanese Order of Physicians. He received his BA in Law from the Université Saint Joseph in Lebanon, is the judicial council of the minister of health and the minister of environment in Lebanon and was the co-author of the Lebanese Code of Medical Ethics, a breakthrough at the time and is co-editor of a book on medical responsibility. Maître Ghafari has been a lecturer on the Lebanese Code of Medical ethics at the Université Saint Joseph, the Lebanese University and our Faculty of medicine ever since 1996. Most importantly, he is always on call, ready to answer our queries, to give us lectures and talks and ready to discuss issues with our students and faculty willingly because he believes that spreading the code of medical ethics is a mission and a moral duty.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for being a friend of AUB and of the Bioethics and Professionalism Program and its mission.

I ask Maitre Ghafari to kindly join me at the podium to receive a small token of our appreciation.