



AUB Mechanical Engineering Department issues statement warning about ineffectiveness of smoking and non-smoking areas in reducing harm from tobacco smoke

Monday, April 19, 2010

“It has come to our attention that the Lebanese Parliament may soon consider a law in which smoking will be banned from indoor public places. Unfortunately, the proposed law provides exemptions for public establishments that make separate smoking and ‘non-smoking’ areas. The Mechanical Engineering Department at the American University of Beirut strongly advises against any such exemptions because it has been shown through numerous scientific studies that partitioning indoor spaces into smoking and non-smoking areas does not work, even when advanced ventilation and filtration technologies are used.

Separate smoking and non-smoking areas do not protect workers and vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly, in any meaningful way from the harm of tobacco smoke. This strategy gives a misleading impression that the non-smoker is being protected from the disease-causing constituents of second-hand smoke, and serves to delay implementation of a true ban on smoking in public places. In reality, smoke travels readily through the air to fill any indoor space, resulting in typically sixty times higher concentrations of cancer-causing airborne particles than the outdoor air. We urge parliament to act on its obligation to protect public health by enacting a law which is consistent with basic scientific principles, and which does not perpetuate tobacco industry myths on the supposed benefits of separate smoking and non-smoking areas.”