

ISSUE 10 - WINTER 2018

# NKBCI NEWSLETTER



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER  
المركز الطبي في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

Our lives are dedicated to yours



NAEF K. BASILE  
CANCER INSTITUTE  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

معهد نافع ك. باسيل للسرطان في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

## APPOINTMENT OF DR. ALI TAHER AS THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE NAEF K. BASILE CANCER INSTITUTE (NKBCI)

Dr. Ali Taher, Professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology – Oncology has been appointed as the new Director of Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI), effective October 1, 2017.

Dr. Ali Taher is an accomplished physician and investigator. He is recognized for his clinical and research work on benign hematological disorders, especially thalassemia. His research earned him international recognition, won him various prestigious awards, and secured large sums of funding. Dr. Taher's distinguished efforts led him to hold several administrative positions at AUB including Associate Chair for Research in the Internal Medicine Department, Founding Director of the Fellowship and Residents Research Program at the Faculty of Medicine.

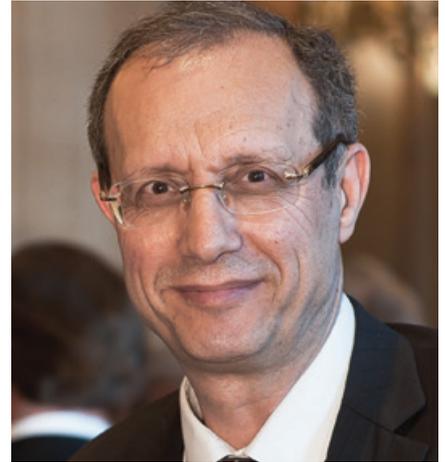
His appointment is made following a thorough international search. His strong record of achievements enabled him to assume the Directorship of NKBCI.



## DR. NAGI EL SAGHIR

Dr. Nagi El Saghir, currently Professor of Clinical Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine and the Director of the Breast Center at the NKBCI, has been recently appointed as the Head of the Division of Hematology-Oncology in the Department of Internal Medicine.

Dr. Saghir will oversee the entire operations pertaining to clinical and academic development of the Hematology-Oncology faculty, curricular teaching of medical students at AUB, training of residents in hematology and oncology, and the stewardship of our outstanding training fellowship program in Hematology-Oncology subspecialty.



## CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. NAGI EL SAGHIR!

The American Society of Clinical Oncology selected Dr. Nagi El Saghir as one of the two candidates on the ballot for the ASCO Board International Oncologist seat for the year 2018 elections; best of luck to Dr. El Saghir.

## DR. HAZEM ASSI

Dr. Hazem Assi, Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology, at the Department of Internal Medicine has been appointed as Director for Clinical Services reporting directly to the NKBCI Director.

In his capacity as Director of Clinical Services, Dr. Assi will be responsible for developing and improving the operations of the oncology service. He will be working with the NKBCI Director and assisting in the implementation of the strategic plan as defined by the NKBCI Director that will lead to the realization of the AUBMC 2020 Vision. Dr. Assi will also play a major role in implementing a smooth and successful move to the New Halim and Aida Daniel Academic and Clinical Center (Daniel ACC) that aims at providing a unique patient experience.



## DR. HIBAH OSMAN

Dr. Hibah Osman has been appointed as the Director of the Palliative Medicine Program at NKBCI at AUBMC.

As an academic, Dr. Osman assumes the title of a Clinical Associate at the Department of Internal Medicine at AUBMC. Her primary responsibility will be to develop the infrastructure required to encourage the growth and expansion of a palliative and supportive care program that will meet the needs of our patients and ensure the delivery of quality palliative care services. She will provide along with the existing Palliative Care team clinical care to both inpatients and outpatients. The Palliative Care Outpatient Clinic will be based in the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute Clinics.



## NKBCI ANNUAL PARTY

NKBCI hosted on December 17, 2017 its fourth annual party at the Lancaster Hotel in the Orabel Ballroom. During the event, Dr. Ali Shamseddine was offered a plaque as an expression of profound gratitude and sincere thanks for leading the Hematology- Oncology division on a pathway of steady growth and prosperity during the last 17 years (2000-2017). Dr. Shamseddine thanked all the physicians for their gesture and acknowledged their support during these years.

Dr. Taher and Dr. El Saghir both elaborated on the vital role the NKBCI staff play to ensure that the patient experience and outcome are both positive.

The party was entertained by Mr. Mohamad Itani, an exceptional Oud player, interacted with the audience and motivated the attendants towards the dance floor. A tombola draw took place afterwards in addition to a Karaoke show. At the end, everyone gathered to cut the cake and wish their peers and colleagues a fruitful new year.



# NKBCI MARATHON PARTICIPATION

Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) and AMALOUNA, an affiliated organization with NKBCI, roamed the streets of Beirut city, running the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Blom Bank Beirut Marathon. On a sunny Sunday morning on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, 2017 runners participated in the Marathon to raise awareness about cancer prevention, education, and research. This year's supporters included AUBMC staff, students, alumni, and faculty along with students from several Lebanese schools and private institutions, who united as one to remind people of the pillar behind every cancer cure: research. The Marathon was the perfect platform to raise awareness about the disease and empower cancer research culture in Lebanon. 450 runners held banners with cancer motivation quotes to spread a message of hope in defeating and curing cancer in our society. In addition, our supporters advocated the importance of running in itself as an effective exercise that is considered as one of the low-cost cancer prevention alternatives. The Marathon hence comprised a combination of both of the LBCF, AMALOUNA and NKBCI pillars: cancer prevention and education.



# SAIDA HEALTH DAY

On September 24, 2017 AMALOUNA organized Saida Health Day in Khan El Franj which is located in the center of Saida. This event was in partnership with Hariri Foundation for Sustainable Human Development, Cancer Prevention and Control Program at NKBCI, American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), AUB Global Health Institute, Champs Fund, and AUB Health and Wellness Center in addition to many hospitals in Saida. The event was the first of its kind in Saida, and it targeted around 1000 visitors. Several booths were present covering health promotion and disease prevention, as well as screening activities related to cancer (general), colorectal cancer, child health, vitals (hypertension, diabetes, and heart rate), cardiac screening, healthy lifestyle (nutrition and dietary habits, smoking cessation, physical activity and physiotherapy) in addition to one booth for Red Cross blood donation. Moreover, numerous free tests were provided including screening tests for breast cancer, colorectal cancer and cervical cancer as well as for lipid profile and blood glucose levels.



## MOVEMBER SHAVE OFF EVENT

Growing awareness of men's health is as important as growing awareness for women's health since men also are prone to serious life threatening diseases.

A joint effort between the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) and Dr. Marco Bardus, Movember veteran and FHS health communication, and others, led to the launching of a new initiative during the month of November. The initiative, #AUBMovember campaign, highlighted men's health and focused on fundraising and awareness activities around healthy lifestyles to reduce cancer risk.

At the instigation of the campaign on November 1, 2017 a community "shave-off event" took place on the West Hall steps, AUB, in partnership with Salon Mike for Men. The event was organized in collaboration with NKBCI, AMALOUNA, Champs Fund, Tobacco-Free AUB, AUB Health and Wellness Center, the Office of Communications, and Student Wellness Outreach at the Office of Student Affairs.



# AWARENESS AT BANK AUDI AND MTC TOUCH

In an effort to increase awareness on breast cancer and to increase support to breast cancer patients, the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) in collaboration with Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) offered an awareness session about breast cancer prevention and means of detection of breast cancer in MTC Touch and Bank Audi. The audience had the chance to inquire about their concerns in an open discussion with AUB-MC professor Dr. Nagi El Saghir.



# DANIELLA RAHME, L'OREAL AMBASSADOR, VISITS NKBCI PATIENTS

Ms. Daniella Rahme, previous Ms. Immigrant, visited NKBCI patients in her new capacity as L'Oreal Ambassador to support women suffering from cancer on October 31, 2017. During her visit, Ms. Rahme encouraged patients to fight cancer and offered them a small souvenir as a gift of appreciation for their battle against the disease. Ms. Rahme pinpointed the importance of increasing awareness about women fighting cancer especially during the month of October. She said, "It is crucial for women to play a vital role in the society since they are the pillars in the fight against cancer."



# NKBCI AT AUBMC RECEIVES STUDENTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY PROGRAM

The NKBCI received students from AUB Preparatory Program and shared with them information about the most common types of cancer, treatment methodologies, and novelty approaches in treating cancer patients.

Dr. Hazem Assi, Director for Clinical Services at NKBCI, provided students with an insight on cancer occurrence both in Lebanon and globally; he also guided them throughout their educational excursion by answering their pertinent questions.

Students expressed their gratitude and thankfulness for this opportunity.



## SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

# FIRST ST. GALLEN ADVANCED PROSTATE CANCER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE MIDDLE EAST SATELLITE MEETING

On November 2 to 4, 2017 the Office of Continuing Medical Education (CME) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), organized the first Advanced Prostate Cancer Consensus Conference (APCCC) Middle East Satellite and Middle East Prostate Cancer Consortium (MEPCC) meeting. Held at the Gefinor Rotana Hotel in Beirut, the conference was co-chaired by Dr. Raja Khauli and Dr. Deborah Mukherji.

Panelists addressed topics such as access to specialized imaging, surgery and novel therapeutics in the region as well as challenges to the implementation of multi-disciplinary management of prostate cancer. A selection of consensus questions from the St. Gallen APCCC, held in Switzerland in March 2017 and which involved 60 international prostate cancer experts including Dr. Raja Khauli, were discussed and voted upon by the attendees. The purpose of the Q&A was to elicit consensus recommendations specific to the Middle East.

This international multidisciplinary conference was endorsed by the Lebanese Society of Medical Oncology and the Lebanese Society of Urology. Speakers included local and regional experts in prostate cancer management such as urologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, and imaging specialists. Faculty members and trainees from AUBMC and other teaching hospitals in Lebanon participated in the meeting that was also attended by urologists and oncologists from Iraq and Syria.

The conference proved to be a success especially since it highlighted specific challenges in the management of advanced prostate cancer and the need for multi-disciplinary management. A manuscript containing the regionally-focused consensus recommendations is in preparation for publication in a medical journal.



## DR. ASSI AND DR. MUKHERJI LECTURE AT THE 1<sup>ST</sup> AUBMC THERANOSTICS CONFERENCE

The Department of Radiation Oncology in collaboration with NKBCI held its first Theranostics conference at AUBMC on November 10-11, 2017. Theranostics, derived from therapy and diagnostics, is the use of radionuclide labeled agents to diagnose disease in patients and then use identical or closely related agents to treat the disease.

The conference aimed to introduce the principle of theranostics and its potential role in guiding cancer therapy; it also encompassed a review of the history and advancement of theranostics and explored different ways to improve the efficacy of the evidence base of therapeutic nuclear medicine. Dr. Deborah Mukherji shared current challenges of theranostics from an oncologist and nuclear medicine prospective and Dr. Assi elaborated on new developments in targeted treatments such as the role of Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitors in non-radioiodine avid metastatic disease.



## SECOND ANNUAL PATIENT EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP FOR CANCER PATIENTS

On Friday October 13, 2017, the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) held its second annual patient empowerment workshop in collaboration with the Breast Center of Excellence at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) of the American University of Beirut (AUB). The workshop aimed to spread hope and courage amongst women with advanced stage of breast cancer. Organized at Rotana Gefinor Hotel, it presented a great opportunity to raise awareness and discuss the disease and treatment options openly.

The unique workshop brought primary-level healthcare providers, a great number of experts in the field, media representatives to support and give a glance of hope to the breast cancer patients and their families. It shed light on the medical needs and quality of life of patients with advanced breast cancer. It included formal lectures and direct small group discussions held by doctors, nurses, psychologists and various specialists from multidisciplinary fields on medical aspects of advanced breast cancer, in addition to the psychological, social, and personal needs of those patients. The workshop covered many aspects of the patients' daily life including nutrition, exercise, sexuality, and family dynamics that are affected by the disease and treatment.

Director of Breast Center of Excellence at AUBMC and President of LBCF, Dr. Nagi El Saghir, presented a session which tackled the treatment and support of patients with advanced breast cancer.

Following, various interesting and important lectures were conducted about topics such as "Coping with Breast Cancer", "Beauty Advice", and "Breast Cancer Beyond the Conventional". These lectures centered on providing patients with knowledge and support and arming them with coping mechanisms to strengthen their belief in their ability to continue living a normal life.

The second annual patient empowerment workshop was well-received by the community at large and proved to be a great success in raising awareness and providing cancer patients and their family members with educational tips on wellness perspectives for living well through and beyond a breast cancer diagnosis.





## FUNDRAISING INDIAN DINNER

The Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute and AUB MOVEMBER Committee at AUBMC organized a Fundraising Indian Dinner for patients with prostate cancer. Dinner took place on Saturday, November 4, 2017 in Gruen- Gefinor-Beirut following the First St. Gallen Advanced Prostate Cancer Consensus Conference Middle East Satellite Meeting. International and regional speakers attended the dinner and appreciated the variety of the rich Indian menu.



## McDonald's DONATE TO HELP ADULT CANCER PATIENTS

McDonald's Lebanon, represented by Mr. Karim Miknas, McDonald's Managing Director, Mohamad Hamandi, McDonald's General Manager and Lina Sadek, McDonald's Marketing Manager, marked their 3<sup>rd</sup> year as proud supporters to NKBCI needy cancer patients. Through the generous contributions made by customers as well as McDonald's Lebanon's administration, a cheque was presented to AUBMC and the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute in a thank you ceremony held at AUBMC on November 15, 2017. In presence was Dr. Ali Taher, Director of Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute.

"At McDonald's, we are proud supporters of Movember, and giving back to our communities is in the DNA of our brand. It is only through this sense of connection that we grow as humans. It is also a way to acknowledge the silent suffering of so many men," Miknas commented.

Dr. Taher stated that early detection and adoption of a healthy lifestyle are key elements that help in reducing the burden of cancer and improving the patient outcome; increasing awareness is vital to improve cancer survivor rate as well.

Dr. Ali Shamseddine, Dr. Arafat Tfayli and Dr. Deborah Mukherji also stressed on the need to increase awareness activities that help raise awareness amongst our community members in relation to healthy habits that prevent cancer occurrence. Moustache pins were distributed as a souvenir.



## NKBCI PHYSICIANS AT AUBMC COLLABORATE IN AN ONLINE MULTIDISCIPLINARY TUMOR BOARD

Physicians at NKBCI are holding regular multidisciplinary tumor boards with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) and MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC) to review cancer cases and make collective decisions about recommendations for patient management. This collaboration was recognized by the American Society of Clinical Oncologists as an initiative for best patient care (ASCO Connection publications).

This is done through videoconferencing that is being used for tumor board discussions as well as case-based teaching. These meetings are organized under the leaderships of Dr. Nagi EL Saghir, Dr. Shamseddine, Dr. Bazarbachi, Dr. Ghassan Abou-Alfa of MSKCC and Dr. Hagop Kantarjian of MDACC. This communication has allowed all physicians to share expertise on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and expand the online tumor boards to include various subspecialties, including hematologic, breast, gastrointestinal, and urologic oncology.

## DR. SHAMSEDDINE AND DR. MUKHERJI LECTURE AT THE 11<sup>TH</sup> BELGIAN SYMPOSIUM ON THE INTEGRATION OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY ADVANCES INTO ONCOLOGY CLINICAL PRACTICE

This symposium aimed to integrate recent advances in molecular biology in oncology and study their impact in clinical practice at the therapeutic level. It also included new paradigms such as Precision Oncology and Human Cancer Immunotherapy. The symposium aims to bring together different oncology experts from different countries to present the most recent research results and give educational talks.

Dr. Ali Shamseddine and Dr. Deborah Mukherji were invited to participate and lecture about “moving from adjuvant to total neoadjuvant therapy in rectal cancer” and “new therapeutic approaches in urothelial cancers”. allowed all physicians to share expertise on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea and expand the online tumor boards to include various subspecialties, including hematologic, breast, gastrointestinal, and urologic oncology.



## 17<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS OF THE “SOCIETE FRANCOPHONE DE GREFFE DE MOELLE”

In a joint effort from NKBCI doctors, fellows and laboratory and pathology medicine physicians, five posters were approved to be presented in the 17th Congress of the “Societe Francophone de Greffe De Moelle”. Their titles are as follows:

- Predictors of early engraftment in autologous peripheral stem cell transplantation. A single center experience.
- Consolidation with bortezomib, lenalidomide, and dexamethasone upgrades the complete remission rate after autologous hematopoietic cell transplantation in patients with multiple myeloma
- Sequential regimen with thiotepa, cyclophosphamide, etoposide, fludarabine and busulfan in allogeneic stem cell transplantation for the treatment of relapsed and refractory hematological malignancies.
- Safety and efficacy of thiotepa based conditioning regimen in patients undergoing allogeneic stem cell transplantation: a retrospective single center experience
- Interim disease evaluation post induction chemotherapy for acute myeloid leukemia



## MS. MALAK KHSHAISH

Ms. Malak Khshaish was selected by the Naef K. Basile Director and the Nursing Director as the Best Oncology Nurse for 2017; she was awarded a trip to the USA to participate in San Antonio Breast Conference. Below are the details of an interview that was done with Ms. Khshaish to know more details about her career and her aspirations.



**Q: When did you join the Naef K. Basil Cancer Institute?**

A: I joined Naef K. Basil in June 2011.

**Q: What is your job title?**

A: I am an Adult Oncology Registered Nurse.

**Q: What are your main responsibilities?**

A: We are held responsible for the implementation of oncology patients' plans of care, including administering medications and chemotherapeutic agents, in addition to nursing care according to a patient's specific needs and coordinating with other multidisciplinary members to achieve optimal patient comfort.

**Q: Prior to joining this department, where were you working?**

A: I worked in the ICU department at Rafik Hariri University Hospital for a year and a half.

**Q: Where did you pursue your college studies?**

A: I earned my Bachelor's degree in Nursing Sciences from the Lebanese University in 2010 and my Master's degree in Healthcare and Quality Management from the Lebanese University in 2016.

**Q: What do you like most about your job?**

A: What I like most about my job is dealing with people who need special and delicate care. Moreover, my job gives me a chance to be able to support others by helping improve their conditions and being rewarded by their praise and gratitude.

**Q: What would you like to improve in your current job?**

A: I would like to improve my knowledge and become more specialized and eventually become a certified oncology nurse. This will enable me to understand the needs of oncology patients more and try to implement innovation in oncology patient care.

**Q: Tell us about your ambition; in what terms would you like to develop your career?**

A: I would like to enhance my knowledge and broaden my expertise in all nursing aspects. I think I can be more academically fit by obtaining my PhD and disseminating my knowledge to nursing students. However, I think that nursing should reach higher levels of development in our community through continuous educational programs so that nurses will be more accountable and competent when dealing with critical patients.

**Q: Where is your best trip destination and why?**

A: My best destination trip was to Europe for I was introduced to new cultures, and I think my attendance to Texas for the Breast Cancer Symposium Conference would be also special and beneficial.

**Q: What are your hobbies?**

A: like singing, doing different types of sports, and traveling to explore different cultures.

**Q: What would be your best food choice?**

A: My preference is spaghetti of different flavors.

**Q: Tell us more about your character.**

A: I am an ambitious girl who likes to grow and develop each day. I am always eager to learn more about my specialty. I am professional, kind, friendly as per my mates in addition to my being optimistic and ready to face life challenges. I am patient when dealing with my patients and enjoy supporting them in their hardships.

**Q: What is your advice to your peers?**

A: I have passed through many stages and challenges. However, I have learned a lot from the mistakes I encountered. So, I advise each nurse to be patient and always seek the opportunities to learn from their mistakes in order to enhance their performance. Furthermore, they should always be up-to-date and knowledgeable so that patients will consider them as trustworthy professional members remarkable among health workers.

**Q: What is your message to cancer patients?**

A: I believe that faith in God and self-persistence to overcome hard times are the only weapons a cancer patient should have. Besides, we as nurses, will always be there for them as God's messengers in supporting them to overcome their physical and psychological struggles.

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