

NKBCI

NEWSLETTER

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47TH MIDDLE EAST MEDICAL ASSEMBLY DISCUSSES INNOVATION AND BREAKTHROUGHS IN ONCOLOGY

The 47th Middle East Medical Assembly (MEMA), held from May 7 to May 9, 2015 was launched in an inauguration ceremony in the presence of Mrs. Lama Salam, wife of Prime Minister Tamam Salam, Dr. Bassem El Shab, representing ex-prime minister Mr. Saad el Hariri, Dr. Mohammed Khalifeh, representing the speaker of the Lebanese Parliament Mr. Nabih Berri, members of the AUB Board of Trustees, Mrs. Mona El Hrawi, Mrs. Leila Al Solh Hamade, AUB President Dr. Fadlo Khuri, Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs and Global Strategy and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at AUB Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh, members of the AUB community, ministers and members of the parliament .

MEMA, taking place at the American University of Beirut's (AUB) Issam Fares Lecture Hall came under the title "Sustained Innovation and Breakthroughs – Updates in Oncology." It brought together physicians and experts in all fields discussing the latest challenges and novelties in oncology. (Continued on page 2)

THE BREAST CANCER UNIT AT AUBMC HOLDS THE 3RD BREAST CANCER CONFERENCE ABOUT THE LATEST ADVANCES IN BREAST CANCER

To discuss the advances in breast cancer management and updates from ASCO, EBCC, ESMO, ABC2, San Antonio and the published literature, the Breast Cancer Center of Excellence at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute at AUBMC and in collaboration with the Clinical and Professional Development Center of the Department of Nursing, the Continuing Medical Education Office at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), and the Lebanese and Pan Arab Medical Societies organized their 3rd Annual Breast Cancer Conference (AUBMC BCC3). The conference was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Health. In its traditional combined medical and oncology nursing session, AUBMC BCC3, which was held on February 13- 14, 2015, at Gefinor Rotana Hotel, presented novel advances in screening and chemoprevention, raising awareness, guidelines for management of hormonal therapy and chemotherapy side effects , progress of advocacy for patient rights in Lebanon and Arab countries and formulated recommendations for improvements.

The conference set the platform for several sessions, presentations, and abstract discussions related to new advances in imaging and pathology, adjuvant and neo-adjuvant management, breast and axilla surgery and reconstruction, radiation therapy, systematic therapy, newly approved targeted therapies, and several tumor boards' interactive case discussions. (Continued on page 4)

47TH MIDDLE EAST MEDICAL ASSEMBLY DISCUSSES INNOVATION AND BREAKTHROUGHS IN ONCOLOGY

The ceremony began with two cancer survivors who shared their experience sending a message of faith, acceptance, and determination. Following the patients' testimonials, Dr. Ali Taher, Chairman of MEMA 2014 and 2015, Professor of Medicine, Hematology and Oncology, Associate Chair – Research, Department of Internal Medicine and Director – Fellowship and Residents Research Program at AUB, opened the assembly.

In his welcoming note, Dr. Taher focused on the role MEMA and AUBMC play in the region in the advancement of science and patient care. He added, "Despite all the ongoing tragedies, hunger, poverty, and wars, we committed ourselves as doctors, scientists and researchers to work for a healthier community and more advanced country."

Following Dr. Taher, Executive VP/Dean Mohamed H. Sayegh welcomed the attendees and spoke of the importance of MEMA being an integral part of the academic mission of the Faculty of Medicine and Medical Center and a cornerstone of the heritage in providing medical education to the region and improving the health of our local and regional community. Sayegh continued, "Cancer is a health issue endemic to our region, and that is why in addition to having it be the focus of MEMA, AUBMC and our adult cancer center of excellence, the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute, are launching a cancer awareness campaign focusing on patients living with cancer and their support network."

MEMA 2015 was honored with keynote speaker, Ms. Sigrid Kaag, United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, and the previous head of the Joint Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations mission for the destruction of chemical weapons in Syria who shared her valuable experiences and knowledge in the medical field and humanitarian issues of relevance to the region.

"MEMA's theme this year is something the UN aspires to uphold in all its work streams including conflict prevention, rule of law, humanitarian and development assistance, especially at a time of major geopolitical changes in the Middle East and elsewhere," added Ms. Kaag. The situation in the region is presenting new challenges for all of us, regardless of our profession. Everyone is facing the pressure of tackling increasing needs, with diminishing resources to save lives, communities and societies. The mantra of doing more with less has gained a new meaning in this environment and innovation is our only answer," continued Ms. Kaag.



Her speech covered several aspects of her experience in the Middle East and shed light on the current state and trajectory of the region, the humanitarian challenges as a result of the continuing armed conflicts in Syria and elsewhere, some of the key political and security issues, and the role of the UN and other multilateral organizations.

MEMA's exhibition and the rich program which spread over two days featured state-of-the-art educational sessions and workshops about primary care, nursing, pharmacists' role in chemotherapy, and nutrition among others.

A special session was held during MEMA where regional experts joined from Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This Cancer Care Forum chaired by Dr. Arafat Tfayli discussed the status of cancer care in each country and the possibility of collaboration.

MEMA, focusing on oncology from a multi-disciplinary perspective, offers panoply of high standard educational lectures on four disciplines: head and neck and lung cancer, brain tumor in children, prostate and bladder cancer and pancreatic and intestinal cancer.

World experts, prestigious institutions, and over a 1000 national, regional, and international participants came together and shared expertise placing MEMA on the map of the most global reputable scientific events. MEMA this year features lectures from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer (MSKCC), St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (SJCRH), Emory University and many other leading and prestigious medical centers and institutions. The event was held in collaboration with the Continuing Medical Education Office (CME) at AUBMC and Cleveland Clinic.

The scientific session was followed by a gala dinner at Four Season's Hotel.

INITIATING NKBCI CANCER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

MEMA coincides to a large extent with the cancer awareness campaigns launched by AUBMC since they both focus on empowering patients, their families and friends, and providing a message of positivity and hope.

A special activation has been introduced during the 47th MEMA opening whereby cancer was transformed into a human figure that communicated with people. Visitors were invited to express their feelings or reactions towards cancer in an attempt to break the fear and create awareness on the importance of prevention, early checkups and optimism that should accompany the disease. "Cancer is a long term experience that teaches you how to handle life from a positive perspective," said a cancer patient survivor. "Cancer is not the end of the world," said another cancer survivor, "People with cancer can beat it if they believe they can overcome its different stages." Communicating well about cancer and expressing the feelings a patient encounters makes it easier to cope with the hardships and conquer the disease. Personifying cancer into a human figure relieved many of the patients who joined the booth and courageously expressed their thoughts out loud.



THE BREAST CANCER UNIT AT AUBMC HOLDS THE 3RD BREAST CANCER CONFERENCE ABOUT THE LATEST ADVANCES IN BREAST CANCER

In his welcoming speech, Director of Breast Center of Excellence at AUBMC and conference Chair, Professor Nagi El Saghir, MD, FACP indicated that the cure rates, based on the latest study recently published at AUBMC, have become very high in Lebanon as more than 90% of patients diagnosed with early stage one breast cancer are alive and well after 5 to 10 years. Yet, many patients from peripheral sites and different Arab regions are coming forward with advanced stages and in need of more surgery and chemotherapy. Dr. Saghir said, "It is important to reinforce public health education and raise awareness in the medical community to apply modern breast cancer surgery and offer, for early detected breast cancers, breast-conserving operations in which the surgeon removes the tumor together with some normal breast tissue surrounding it without affecting the general disposition of the breast."

Almost 190 attendees, Lebanese and Arabs, from different multidisciplinary fields including physicians, nurses, researchers, scientists, and patient advocates attended the various medical and nursing sessions in addition to new research from AUBMC for which young AUBMC presenters were acknowledged with Best Abstract Certificates and financial awards. Speakers included experts from Switzerland, Belgium, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, in addition to AUBMC faculty members.

The continuous efforts over the past 15 years resulted in a significant downward change in the stages of breast cancer in Lebanon with relatively less advanced cases and higher survival rates.



AUBMC'S NAEF K. BASILE CANCER INSTITUTE RECEIVES GENEROUS DONATION FROM THE LEBANESE BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION

The Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at AUBMC has received a benevolent donation of \$135,000 from the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) in a ceremony held at AUBMC on April 8, 2015. The donation is used to cover treatment expenses of breast cancer patients treated at AUBMC's Breast Center of Excellence at NKBCI.

The LBCF has also been helping patients with installments and a copayment for health services received at AUBMC and has organized several fundraising and awareness campaigns throughout the country. The ceremony was attended by members of AUBMC and LBCF leadership including Deputy VP/Dean Dr. Ziyad Ghazzal, Chief of Staff and Director of the NKBCI and Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon (CCCL), Dr. Hassan El Solh, Dr. Nagi El Saghir, Director Breast Center of Excellence and President of the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation and Vice President of LBCF Mrs. Mirna Hoballah.

Breast cancer is a major health issue in Lebanon and the Middle East with a staggering 1,700 new cases diagnosed every year in Lebanon alone. The collaboration between LBCF and NKBCI has been leading the way in advancing cancer therapy with ground-breaking research, continuing medical education for physicians and health care providers, and raising awareness within the Lebanese community.

Professor Nagi El Saghir, MD, FACP indicated that cure rates, based on the latest study recently published at AUBMC, have become very high in Lebanon; more than 90% of patients diagnosed with early stage breast cancer (Stage 1 and 2) are alive and well after five to 10 years. "Raising awareness about breast cancer in Lebanon, promoting screening and early detection, helps patients who are diagnosed with breast cancer go through the journey of diagnosis, surgery, chemotherapy, and hormonal therapy positively," said Dr. Saghir. He acknowledged all donors, volunteers, breast cancer survivors and friends for organizing awareness campaigns and fundraising events throughout Lebanon and in Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Hassan El Solh, spoke on behalf of Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh, Executive VP for Medical Affairs and Global Strategy and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, , and expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the efforts exerted by the LBCF. Dr. Solh explained, "Such collaboration is a role model for other charity organizations to follow in a way that we, AUBMC and LBCF, work together as a team." He added, "AUBMC will be expanding the diagnostic and therapeutic facilities and developing research programs for prevention and control of cancer in general, including breast cancer, to establish Centers of Excellence, in line with the AUBMC 2020 Vision."

On behalf of AUBMC, Dr. Solh thanked the LBCF for the donation acknowledging the work of all parties to deliver better care to patients with breast cancer.



THE 3RD ACHOG COURSE ON ANGIOGENESIS DISCUSSES THE LATEST ADVANCES IN CANCER ANGIOGENESIS

Held on February 23-24, 2015 in Amman, Jordan, the Arab Collaborative Hematology and Oncology Group Fighting Cancer through Capacity Building (ACHOG) held the 3rd Course on Angiogenesis to discuss the latest advances in the basic science of cancer angiogenesis as well as anti-angiogenic treatment approaches of different solid malignancies.

The course was co-chaired by Dr. Ali Shamseddine, Head of Hematology Oncology Division at the Department of Internal Medicine the American University of Beirut (AUBMC) and Dr. Ghassan Abou Alfa, Associate Professor in GI Oncology Service from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) with several faculty members from MSKCC and AUBMC including Dr. Cliff Hudis, immediate past president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).

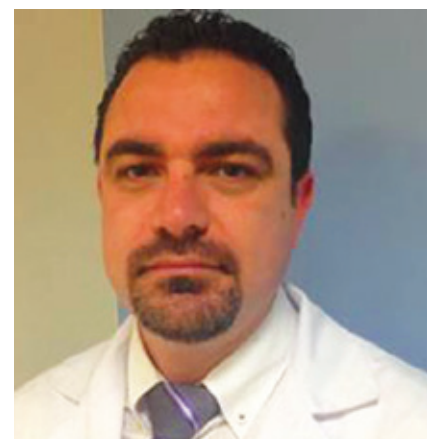
The meeting was well-attended by physicians, nurses, scientists and health care professionals with an oncology focus. It was adjourned by identifying research and clinical priorities that will help improve patient care by targeting angiogenesis.



NEW FACULTY

Dr. Jean El Cheikh who joined the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute at AUBMC as Assistant Professor of Clinical Medicine, subspecialty Hematology Oncology, in the Department of Internal Medicine. Dr. El-Cheikh received his MD from the Medical School Federico II at the University of Naples in Italy in 1999, followed by advanced training in Bone Marrow Transplantation for both autologous and allogeneic transplants, as part of his Hematology training at the Post Graduate School of Hematology and the Institute Seragnoli of Hematology and Medical Oncology, University of Bologna, Italy.

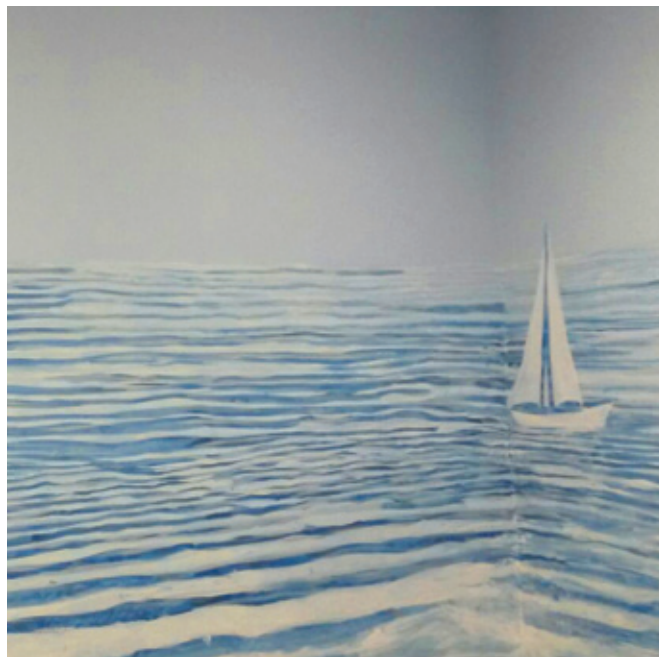
In 2003 he moved to France and was Junior Faculty "Chef de Clinique Assistant" (Onco-Hematology Service II) at the Institut J. Paoli - I. Calmettes, Marseilles, which is one of the biggest centers for allogeneic transplantation in France with more than 130 transplanted patients every year. In 2005, and until his move to AUB, he was a consultant physician at the Unit of Transplantation and Cellular Therapy, Institut J. Paoli - I. Calmettes. So far, Dr. El Cheikh has performed more than 7000 transplants including autologous and allogeneic transplants (matched related, mismatched related, cord blood, matched unrelated, mismatched unrelated and haplo-identical transplants). Similarly, he has significant experience in the field of multiple myeloma and transplantation, with a special clinical focus on developing reduced-toxicity conditioning regimens and immunomodulation. He also has clinical and research experience in infectious diseases and supportive care in the context of intensive therapy for hematologic malignancies. Dr. El Cheikh has published more than 70 peer-reviewed articles in the field of stem cell transplantation, leukemia and myeloma, in different hematology and immunology journals. He also serves as a reviewer for major journals such as Blood, Transplantation, Bone Marrow Transplantation, Leukemia & Lymphoma, European Journal of Haematology, and Blood Cancer Journal. He is member of many scientific societies such as the European Group of Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EBMT), the European Hematology Association, and many French and European societies.



PAINTINGS GENEROUSLY DONATED BY STUDENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS AT AUB

For the purpose of producing an intended behavior change in cancer patients and their families, students from the Department of Fine Arts and Art History at AUB created two wall paintings. The paintings, full of warmth and cheer, will boost the morale of cancer patients and add a lively atmosphere to the basement --home to the Radiation Oncology Department (AUBMC) – the place where they usually seek daily treatment.

A special ceremony was held to thank the team for their great job.



NEW AMBULATORY TREATMENT UNIT

A new Ambulatory Treatment Unit has been established, staffed, and equipped in order to serve the increasing number of patients at NKBCI requiring chemotherapy, blood products transfusion, IV antibiotics etc... This unit is an extension of the Outpatient Infusion Services at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute.

Located in Building 56 -Ground floor, the new unit includes 7 beds that will be open for Infusion Services on a prescheduled appointment system as an extension to the existing unit on the second floor.



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Dr. Deborah Mukherji was awarded a scholarship from the Dubai-Harvard Foundation and completed the Harvard Medical School Global Clinical Scholars Research Training Program in June 2015.
- Dr. Ali Shamseddine and Dr. Deborah Mukherji were invited to attend the first St Gallen Advanced Prostate Cancer Consensus Conference in March 2015. Dr. Mukherji was awarded a travel grant by the Movember Foundation.
- Dr. Ali Taher was selected to chair the Social Committee in MEMA 2016 and Dr. Deborah Mukherji was selected to lead the Scientific Program.
- Dr. Ali Taher was selected as the Chairman for Red Cell Biology in September 2015
- Dr. Ali Taher was selected as an editor for setting the guidelines for the management of Transfusion-Dependent Thalassemia (TDT) treatment by the Thalassemia International Federation (2014) and was an invited speaker to several International Meetings during 2015 including:
 - 20th Congress of European Hematology Association (EHA) in Vienna, June 2015.
 - 10th Swiss Haemoglobinopathy Meeting in Switzerland, July 2014
 - University of Lausanne
 - International Congress of Challenges in Pediatric Hematology and Oncology in Tehran, September 2015
 - 7th National Thalassemia Seminar in Malaysia, August 2015

CONGRATULATIONS

- Dr. Zeina Ayoub will be joining the Radiation Oncology Fellowship Program at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Texas by the beginning of the academic year 2016/ 2017.
- Dr. Imane El Dika will be joining the Advanced Oncology Fellowship Program at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York by the beginning of the academic year 2016/ 2017.
- Mrs. Zeina Koussa for her appointment as the Nurse Manager for the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute Ambulatory Treatment Units 1 and 2 as well as the Hematology Oncology Specialty Clinics.
- Mrs. Zeina Koussa for receiving the Nursing Director Award 2014-2015.
- Mrs. Mariam El Sabee for being awarded the NK Basile Best Physician Award 2014-2015.
- Hematology Oncology Fellows Drs. Imane Abou Delle and Hiba Moukaddem for getting married.



* Special wishes for a full recovery to our Oncology RN Hassan Younes.



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