

AUBMC organizes the 7th Friends of MS Annual Fundraising Brunch

Beirut, March 26, 2019: To raise awareness on Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Friends of MS in collaboration with Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) organized for the 7th year in a row its fundraising brunch on Saturday, March 23, 2019 at the Four Seasons Hotel. The brunch featured the attendance of AUB president, Dr. Fadlo Khury along with a high caliber of officials, physicians, artists, public figures, social activists and members of the press who joined efforts to raise funds for MS patients.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune disease that affects the central nervous system (CNS), which is comprised of the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. It can cause problems with vision, balance, muscle control, and other basic body functions. MS can occur at any age, but usually affects people between the ages of 20 and 50, and is twice as common in women as in men. While causes are still unknown, scientists believe that a combination of environmental and genetic factors contribute to the risk of developing MS. In Lebanon, it's worth to mention that the Ministry of Public Health offers full coverage for MS patients who are not insured by NSSF or private insurance companies.

“Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center at AUBMC focuses on addressing physical, emotional, cognitive and rehabilitation needs of MS patients and their family members through a multidisciplinary approach,” said Dr. Fadlo Khury. “I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone who is taking part in developing the center to provide one of the most comprehensive programs for MS care and research in Lebanon, offering state-of-the-art resources. With your generous donations, we are able to cater for the most advanced specialized care, supported by an extensive program of research and education to MS patients in Lebanon,” Dr. Khury added.

“We strongly believe that patient support is vital in MS to optimize outcomes for patients, society and healthcare systems,” said Mrs. Roula Douaidy, representing Friends of MS. “It is essential to involve all stakeholders in potential solutions, working in a multidisciplinary way to ensure that people with MS receive the best care possible. Our role as Friends of MS is to educate the public to better understand MS, raise funds to support MS patients in Lebanon regardless of their religion or nationality, and support the research center at AUB”.

Mrs. Roula Douaidy added: “Cognitive rehabilitation was not present not only in Lebanon but in the region as a whole. In around 30 to 50 % of patients, MS results in difficulties with cognitive functioning such as poor concentration or memory. These symptoms affect the

patients' daily life and work, especially that our patients are young and in their productive years. Cognitive rehabilitation has demonstrated its effectiveness for improving occupational functioning, psychosocial adjustment, and overall life satisfaction”.

Established in February 2012, Friends of MS at AUBMC is an all-volunteer group that supports AUBMC's Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center. The group aims to raise awareness of the invisible symptoms of MS to help early diagnosis and highlight the unseen impact on quality of life. Every year, Friends of MS launches a series of activities across Lebanon to provide financial aid for underprivileged MS patients. Since its inception, more than 200 patients have received financial support at the Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center. The support included patient coverage for MRIs, EEGs, hospital admissions, tests, procedures for pain management among other services.

“In 2018 alone, Friends of MS have covered more than 800 financial requests, where almost half went to hospitalizations and the other half to cover laboratory and radiology tests,” said Mrs. Hindo Saab, a member of Friends of MS.

“Nursing care can play an important role in helping MS patients understand their disease and maximize their quality of life. Attending an MS patient is completely different than any other disease as the impact of this disease is tremendous. Patients experience fatigue, muscle spasms, weakness and problems with coordination, balance and limb functions but also depression and social challenges,” said Joelle Massouh, specialty nurse at AUBMC.

The event was hosted by TV presenter Rola Safa and featured the performance of Latoya and The Band who charmed the audience with her charismatic performance in addition to a raffle draw giving away valuable prizes offered by the event sponsors.

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About AUBMC

Since 1902, AUBMC has been providing the highest standards of care to patients across Lebanon and the region. It is also the teaching hospital for the Faculty of Medicine at AUB (established in 1867), which has trained generations of medical students and physicians, and whose graduates can be found at leading institutions around the world. AUBMC is the only medical institution in the Middle East to have earned the five international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, CAP, ACGME-I and JACIE attesting to its superior standards in patient-centered care, nursing, pathology/laboratory services and graduate medical education.

The Faculty of Medicine has graduated over 4,000 medical students and physicians; the Rafic Hariri School of Nursing provides excellent education for the nursing staff, and the Medical Center meets the healthcare needs of over 360,000 patient visits annually.

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