

The Children's Heart Center at AUBMC Makes History by Performing The First Successful Heart Transplant in Lebanon in the Pediatric Age Group

On June 14, 2017, the Children's Heart Center (CHC) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) joined the elite heart centers in the world by performing its first successful heart transplant for a pediatric patient in Lebanon. The child was 5 years of age. A few days later, the patient was successfully taken off the breathing machine. The child, in good condition, smiled at his mother, held her arm, and asked for a cup of water.

A multidisciplinary team at the center contributed towards this pivotal milestone in the treatment of pediatric and congenital heart disease (CHD) patients. The team was led by the Chief of Pediatric and Congenital heart surgery, in addition to the team of pediatric cardiologists, pediatric intensivists, and cardiac anesthesiologists with the remarkable contribution of AUBMC nursing and operating room teams.

Dr. Issam El Rassi, Chief of Pediatric and Congenital Cardiac Surgery at CHC and the lead surgeon of this groundbreaking operation, said: "Heart transplantation is one of the most gratifying and inspiring procedures we can perform to help a child in a terminal stage to have the chance of living."

This first-of-its-time procedure in a child taking place at AUBMC, paves the way for advancement in CHD management as a lifesaving option in Lebanon so that "no child dies of heart disease as even heart transplantation can be performed". This procedure comes in alignment with AUBMC 2020 Vision through the establishment of leading clinical and academic medical centers in the region.

Dr. Fadi Bitar, the Director of the Children's Heart Center commented: "This landmark adds to the exceptional and unparalleled services that CHC is providing towards the betterment of patients with congenital heart disease in Lebanon and the region." It is because of the culture of giving that this milestone has been attained. The extraordinary giving of the donor family, who offered the heart of their beloved dying child as a gift, so that another child will have a chance at life. It is also the giving of the community to the Brave Heart Fund (BHF) that helped to support the cost of this expensive operation. BHF has also helped in saving the lives of more than 3,300 patients so far with the pledge to assist underprivileged children, suffering from CHD, in any possible way for "no child should die of heart disease because of a lack of funds".

Dr. Marianne Majdalani, the Chief Intensivist of the Pediatric and Cardiac Intensive Care Unit said: "We are privileged and humbled by the trust of the recipient and donor families. Our love and respect is deemed to the donor's family; and our success is because of the exceptional teamwork that our physicians, nurses, and allied healthcare providers deliver.

The expenses of the operation and treatment are being supported by the Ministry of Public Health, Brave Heart Fund (BHF), and AUBMC Administration.