

## **World Cancer Day: AUBMC to Redefine the Cancer Prevention and Control amid COVID-19**

**The Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) in collaboration with King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center held the first awareness virtual meeting in Lebanon and the Region**

**Beirut, February 04, 2021:** On the occasion of World Cancer Day, the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center, in collaboration and provider-ship with King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center (KHCC), held the an awareness virtual meeting under the title of “Cancer Prevention and Control Redefined Amid COVID-19” in Lebanon and the region.

The first-of-its-kind webinar was attended by various representatives of Lebanese and regional medical centers, foundations, non-governmental organizations, as well as local and international physicians, and health professionals from different backgrounds including medicine, nursing, and public health. It was an opportunity for attendees to discuss and find ways to collaborate on tackling the challenges and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cancer care continuum: from primary prevention and early detection to delivery of cancer care, as well as evolving strategies from cancer institutions and NGOs. Among the many topics that were addressed, the most crucial ones were the primary prevention of cancer within the context of social distancing, the impact of COVID-19 on cancer screening and early detection, the overview and continuity of cancer care, as well as the innovative and adaptive community outreach plans required to sustain cancer prevention during the pandemic. The conference also included a competition for the most creative idea to raise cancer awareness amid COVID-19.

Dr. Rihab Nasr, Director of the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at NKBCI said: “The pandemic created huge challenges affecting every single aspect of cancer care, patients, and healthcare providers. It has severely impacted cancer prevention and control, leading to a dramatic decrease in cancer screening, and a delay in early diagnosis and delayed cancer care. Thus, we should adapt to meet the new challenges we are facing as cancer is not preventable.”

Expressing his gratitude and appreciation for the efforts exerted by KHCC foundation, Dr. Ali Taher, NKBCI Director said: “These challenges forced us as experts to come together in an attempt to win the fight. Our collaboration today with King Hussein Cancer Center is a great step towards enhancing knowledge exchange and promoting cancer awareness in the era of COVID-19”. He also added: “We, at the NKBCI, have strived to make the whole community, especially cancer patients, recognize and advocate the importance of their health and wellbeing during these difficult days. We are grateful for Princess Ghida Talal and the King Hussein Cancer Foundation for supporting us through several donations, including medications to the Basile Cancer Institute and the Cancer Support Fund.”

In the opening speech, Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB President, said: “On this occasion, we bring together our efforts with treasured partners to carry out a crucial task that is saving, protecting, and enhancing humanity’s most precious asset; life itself. In the face of the pandemic, we need to join hands more than ever to better understand the changing dynamic it plays and to find new ways to evolve and create practical measures ensuring continued cancer prevention and control to provide care to all the needy”.

Her Royal Highness, Princess Ghida Talal said: “No one can ignore this pandemic which had invaded Cancer Centers worldwide and introduced a new set of challenges to cancer institutions across the globe. Fighting cancer has always been a challenge but fighting cancer during a pandemic demands huge efforts and resources and requires a close partnership between institutions to increase cooperation and re-direct the world’s attention to fight against cancer”.

During the meeting, Dr. Otis Brawley, Bloomberg Distinguished Professor of Oncology and Epidemiology at Johns Hopkins University stated that COVID-19 is displacing many non-COVID patients and depriving them of healthcare. Many victims of the COVID pandemic died of non-COVID disease due to overcrowded healthcare centers. To prevent cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and help survive COVID, Dr. Brawley focused on the importance of maintaining a good diet, taking care of one’s well-being, exercising, and most importantly, not smoking.

In conclusion, the webinar aimed to motivate all healthcare workers to spread awareness about cancer prevention and control even during the COVID pandemic in an attempt to prevent the imminent increase in cancer incidence in the near future. It pledges the strong commitment of both AUBMC and NKBCI to continually assist and support cancer patients especially through the pandemic leading to better health and well-being.

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