

AUB Hosts the 49th Edition of the Middle East Medical Assembly (MEMA) “Mental Health Across the Lifespan”

Beirut, 20 April 2018: The Middle East Medical Assembly (MEMA 2018) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) comes this year with a new direction holding its first conference on mental health. It focuses on Mental Health across the Lifespan and tackles various topics that are highly impactful on the wellbeing of individuals in society including the latest evidence- based assessment and intervention discoveries in the prevention and treatment of psychiatric disorders across the life span and across different contexts.

The conference was launched in an opening ceremony in the presence of Lebanese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, H.E. Ghassan Hasbani, represented by Director of the Medical Care Directorate at the Ministry of Public Health, Dr. Joseph El Helou, President of the American University of Beirut Fadlo Khuri, Executive Vice President for Medicine and Global Strategy, Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Mohamed H. Sayegh, Chairperson of the 49th MEMA, Dr. Samir Atweh, Chairperson of MEMA Scientific Committee, Dr. Fadi Maalouf, Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Delegation in Beirut, Christophe Martin, President of the Lebanese Psychiatric Society (LPS), Wadih Naja, keynote speaker, Dr. Gregory Eells, and members of the AUB community, faculty, and staff.

For the first time in its long history, the MEMA 49th edition which is taking place on April 19 – 22, taps into an enormous array of mental health concerns based on a tremendous need in our society to enforce mental wellbeing strategies and scale up interventions that aim at improving the mental health of the population. Mental disorders have become one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, however, treatment gaps for these conditions locally and regionally remain alarmingly wide.

In his welcoming note, Dr. Samir Atweh highlighted the role MEMA, the American University of Beirut Medical center (AUBMC), and AUB play in the region in the advancement of science and patient care. He said: “MEMA is one of the most important continuing medical education activities in the region. This year, we will engage with this multifaceted subject from numerous perspectives, ranging from the mental health of women and children to major psychiatric disorders. We will also feature the challenging area of mental health in conflict. “Mental Health across the Lifespan” is of wide interest to physicians, nurses, educators, and the media.”

Dr. Sayegh said, “MEMA 2018 does not present itself today as a platform to discuss the mental challenges across the lifespan only, but as a multidisciplinary field which involves psychological, physical, and social effects.”

Dr. Khuri said, “Throughout our 152-year history, the AUB community has concentrated on responding to local and regional needs: it has tackled epidemics, treated the casualties of war and conflict, and focused research and innovation on issues of local relevance. In this 49th edition of MEMA, we again confront a pressing issue in the region. In line with AUB’s Health 2025 Vision, which seeks to develop a comprehensive approach to human health across multiple disciplines, this gathering dispenses with the artificial boundaries that divide the fields of public health, nursing science, and the different branches of clinical medicine. In order to confront the challenges of mental health, we must work together to come up with effective solutions that are appropriate to local contexts, implementable in diverse communities, and sustainable in the long term.”

In his turn, Dr. Helou said, “A scientific activity of this quality drives mental health forward, both regionally and nationally. For a very long time, mental health was a need and a right. Therefore, the Ministry is working in cooperation with various partners to establish 12 community mental health centers across Lebanon.”

“This conference has an exceptional line up of more than 140 speakers from all over the world contributing to 40 different sessions including symposia, workshops, roundtable discussions, and keynote speeches,” said Dr. Fadi Maalouf.

The program this year will tackle a number of topics such as Mental Health in the Workplace, Mental Health and Conflict, Women’s Mental Health and Sexual Health, Sleep and Mental Health, School and College Mental Health, Mental Health and Physical Health, Mental Health in Primary Care, Child Mental Health, Updates in Major Psychiatric Disorders, and Mental Health Research in the Arab World.

This edition of MEMA eschews the artificial boundaries that divide areas such as public health, nursing science, and clinical medicine. To confront such broad fields as mental health, multiple disciplines must work together to come up with solutions that are appropriate to the local context, implementable in diverse communities, and sustainable in the long term.

MEMA’s exhibition and the rich program which spreads over four days features state-of-the-art educational sessions and workshops about primary care, nursing, pharmacists’ role in chemotherapy, and nutrition among others. A track is dedicated to primary care physicians, internists, pediatricians and neurologists and a second one is dedicated to mental health professionals. This is in addition to awareness sessions that will be open to the general public.

The conference will be held at Issam Fares Lecture Hall is in joint providership with Cleveland Clinic and in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS).

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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.

For more information please visit our website www.aubmc.org or contact:

The AUBMC Office of Communications at 0096 1 350000 ext. 4732 –
Email: praubmc@aub.edu.lb

Memac Ogilvy Public Relations at 01-486065 ext.138
Carmen El Hajj/Charbel Ghsoub – charbel.ghsoub@ogilvy.com

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