

Clarification Statement from the American University of Beirut Medical Center Administration

In the past few days, several media outlets circulated a report by the Central Inspectorate that 1,600 people who had not registered at the Ministry of Public Health's electronic platform received the vaccine at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC). AUBMC administration is keen to clarify that these allegations are inaccurate.

Registration on the platform is in three stages. In the first stage, the citizen fills out the application form on the platform. In the second stage, the platform sends a text message instructing the citizen to set an appointment for the vaccine. In the third stage, the platform sends a list of people whose appointments have been scheduled at the vaccination center where the citizen registered his/ her name.

For more than three months, the Medical Center has been working promptly and diligently at its own expense to establish a well-prepared and professionally designed vaccination center capable of vaccinating up to two thousand citizens per day. For this purpose, it recruited a team of specialists and volunteers from its staff and students to undertake its civic duty for this center skillfully and professionally.

Indeed, the vaccination campaign was launched on February 14, 2021, a day designated for healthcare workers registered in the first priority category as per the Ministry's guidelines. When the platform was launched on that date, only one appointment appeared on the system. Because of this malfunction and in the presence of His Excellency, the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Hamad Hassan; the Head of the National Immunization Committee, Dr. Abdel-Rahman Bizri; the Minister of Public Health principal advisor, Dr. Muhammad Haidar; and representatives of Pfizer, AUBMC administration was asked to proceed with vaccinating its healthcare workers who are already registered on the platform.

As agreed with the MoPH, data on these workers was to be forwarded to the ministry within 48 hours to finalize their registration at the platform. In fact, 536 individuals who were registered on the platform were vaccinated on the day, and their data was submitted within the required period.

On the following day, February 15, a day dedicated to the vaccination of healthcare workers and the elderly above 75 of age, vaccinations started through registration on the Ministry of Public Health's platform although several malfunctions remained unresolved. These technical issues hindered the proper flow of the vaccination process, and a large number of elderly individuals arrived at AUBMC showing appointments sent to them by phone messages. These appointments were not visible on the platform so AUBMC staff could not rely on them to vaccinate people. After contacting and consulting with Dr. Bizri and Dr. Haidar, vaccination proceeded with all scheduled elderly individuals who presented to the center even if their names were not showing on the platform. This helped reduce the inconvenience caused by the platform malfunction.

With the gradual improvement of the performance of the platform in the following days, a total of 2467 individuals who were registered on the platform and received text notifications of their appointments, were vaccinated by the end of the first week. On the other hand, 1648 individuals who had already registered on the platform were vaccinated without appointments during the malfunctioning of the platform system. In due time, the list of these individuals were provided to the Ministry, which was fully aware of the major difficulties precipitated by the recurrent malfunctions of the registration procedure at the platform.

AUBMC is keen to reaffirm that no person who was not registered on its electronic platform or on the system provided by the Ministry of Public Health and supervised by the National Committee for Corona Vaccine has been vaccinated at its center.

We conclude by urging all media networks to relay accuracy and maintain professionalism in their reporting and dissemination of news, because of the impact that this has on the health sector in general and the internal operations of hospitals in particular. We should not deviate from our over-arching goal of vaccinating the largest possible number of citizens in the shortest period possible to reach societal immunity and contain the spread of the pandemic.

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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

Papou Rmeily - 01-486065 ext.135 papou.rmeily@ogilvy.com

Rolande El Ghusayni - 01-486065 ext. 261 rolande.elghusayni@ogilvy.com