

NKBCI

NEWSLETTER

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The American University of Beirut Medical Center Holds the First Collaborative Cancer Research Conference

The Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), and in joint collaboration with MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, USA (MDACC) and King Hussein Cancer Center in Amman, Jordan (KHCC), organized the first of its kind international Cancer Research Medical Conference in Lebanon titled "Connecting through Research". The conference, which has been alternating since 2011 between Amman and Beirut, was held on March 24-25, 2017 at the Monroe Hotel, Beirut.



Designed for healthcare professionals in the region, the meeting aimed at increasing research knowledge and collaborative clinical research on cancer with a positive impact on patient care. The conference featured as well the renewal of the signing agreement between MDACC and AUBMC.

During the event, a wide panel of speakers and experts reviewed the latest updates in international cancer research, provided a rich multidisciplinary program on the novel advances, and presented new data from the Middle East region. The meeting focused on the following topics: supportive care for cancer patients, genitourinary oncology, thoracic and head and neck oncology, gastrointestinal oncology, gynecologic oncology and perspectives on clinical trials in the region. In addition to the keynote speeches presented by experts from MDACC and AUBMC, twenty seven abstracts were presented by experts, junior faculty, and nurses from KHCC, AUBMC, and AUB Basic Sciences Department. Another thirty six abstracts from both institutions were accepted for poster presentations.



Held under the patronage and in the presence of the Chairperson of King Hussein Cancer Foundation and Center in Jordan, HRH Princess Ghida Talal, and President of the American University of Beirut (AUB), Dr. Fadlo Khuri, the conference presented an opportunity to exchange scientific knowledge among the attendees. Her Royal Highness Princess Ghida Talal made opening remarks and called for the establishment of an Arab fund for cancer research to develop treatment protocols that are tailored to the Arab patients in particular and said, "I am so proud of our partnership with the AUBMC and MDACC, another example of the important role that strategic partnerships play in the fight against cancer."



In their opening speeches, the organizer of the meeting Drs. Fady Geara, Chairman of the Radiation Oncology Department, and Dr. Ali Taher, NKBCI Deputy Director, welcomed the attendees and thanked the scientific committee for their efforts in combining successful research to initiate collaboration between different groups. Dr. Taher said, "It is through education, compassion, and enlightenment that we can overcome ignorance and build the foundations for a stronger Arab world. Through the annual exchange of scientific knowledge between King Hussein Cancer Center and AUB under the umbrella of MD Anderson Cancer Center, we attest to our belief in the importance of scientific exchange in conducting research and analyzing scientific abstracts." Dr. Geara indicated that "Joining our efforts will improve our impact and visibility on the international scene." Dr. Hassan El Solh, Medical Center Director and Chief Medical Officer Director, Children's Cancer Center Institute Director, the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute in his turn welcomed the attendees on and thanked the scientific committee on behalf of the NKBCI faculty and staff and said, "One of the main pillars of the AUBMC 20/20 Vision is the development of Centers of Excellence and innovative academic programs. It is our aim to ensure the best quality of healthcare for our patients through the development of administrative systems and health information technologies such as AUBHealth."

Dr. Hilario Mata, Director of Global Academic Programs at MD Anderson Cancer Center, commented "The sister institution relationships with AUB was first signed in 2007 and it was the first official relationship established in the Middle East. We are convinced that this relation will continue to add value not only to the sister institution but to the cure of cancer worldwide." AUB president, Dr. Fadlo Khuri said, "The battle to impact dread human conditions like cancer requires nothing less than all of our best efforts. It is in this spirit that we join with sister institutions including MD Anderson and the King Hussein Cancer Center in a determined approach through which our respective strengths can be multiplied working side by side."



The 4th Course of Angiogenesis with Recent Advances in Immunotherapy

Under the umbrella of the Arab Collaborative Hematology/Oncology Group (ACHOG) in close collaboration with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) and the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) the 4th course of "Angiogenesis with Recent Advances in Immunotherapy" was held in Phoenecia Hotel – Beirut on February 17-18, 2017. Since 2012, this course has been organized annually in different locations including Beirut, Istanbul, and Amman.

The course presents a combination of Angiogenesis course that was established by Professor Eric Van Cutsem under the umbrella of the European Society of Medical Oncology in Barcelona from 2006 to 2010.

The fourth course was chaired by Dr. Ghassan Abou Alfa from MSKCC and Dr. Ali Shamseddine from AUBMC. More than 150 participants attended the course from Lebanon and the Arab countries in addition to India and Iran. A wide panel of speakers and experts from MSKCC, Europe, and Lebanon covered the most recent advances of angiogenesis and immunotherapy in different oncologic topics.

The next course will be held in February 2019.



Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation and Breast Center of Excellence at NKBCI Raise Awareness on International Women's Day

Under the high patronage of the First Lady of Lebanon, HE Mrs. Nadia Aoun and for the occasion of International Women's Day, the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) and the Breast Cancer Center of Excellence at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) organized their 5th Annual Fundraising Brunch on Saturday, March 11 at the Phoenecia Hotel in Beirut under the title "Ftahla Albak".

In presence were Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, Minister of State for Administrative Development Dr. Inaya Ezzeddine, Ambassador of the European Union Christina Lassen, Deputy Bahia Hariri, Former Minister Leila Solh- Hamadeh, Mrs. Lama Tammam Salam, Executive VP for Medicine and Global Strategy and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh, Mrs. Claudine Aoun Roukoz, Mrs. Chantal Aoun Basile, and a large number of doctors and dignitaries.



The event opened with the Lebanese national anthem and a recorded video message from the Lebanese President, HE General Michel Aoun. President Aoun spoke about his personal experience when his mother had breast cancer, stressed on the importance of women to take care of their health and of men to stand by their women and support them if they have the disease.

Dr. Sayegh expressed his pleasure in attending such an occasion and said, "We are excited and proud to share with you and this distinguished crowd of scientific, academic and social dignitaries the launching of this unique campaign in Lebanon, which aims to spread awareness and raise the level of the education of individuals, society, and officials against breast cancer disease and shed light on the importance of early detection of tumors. Our vision for the year 2020 is to ensure the continuation of our leadership through our constant quest to provide excellent healthcare and support community work and campaigns aiming at the early detection of diseases before their development," he added.

In his turn, Dr. Nagi El Saghir welcomed the First Lady and the attendees and thanked them for their presence and continuous efforts to support the cause. "We at the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation and the Breast Cancer Center of Excellence at NKBCI take pride in the participation of President Michel Aoun in this event, and the patronage of the First Lady Nadia Aoun to honor women on this global day and remind them to prioritize their health," he said. Dr. El Saghir said that these awareness campaigns have so far changed the face of breast cancer in Lebanon, reduced unnecessary fears and caused a decrease in advanced breast cancer at presentation. He showed that two thirds of breast cancer patients in Lebanon are now diagnosed at early stages. Studies from AUBMC have shown that patients diagnosed at earlier stages have a very high chance of cure in more than 80-90% of patients, often without even the need for total mastectomy nor removal of all lymph nodes in the axilla, nor chemotherapy for slowly growing small tumors. Dr. El Saghir emphasized support from The First Lady and National Commission for Woman's Affairs," and Minister of Health to transition from the current periodic October awareness and screening campaigns to institutional methodology based at the Ministry of Health.



He added, "International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the achievements of women on a social, economic, cultural and political level worldwide. On this day and to be consistent with the theme of this year's campaign #BeBoldforChange", we affirm that paying attention to women's health is another important challenge to attain better access to care and full equality in society." Dr. El Saghir concluded his speech by thanking all the volunteers in LBCF and AUBMC, and specifically Vice -President of LBCF, Mrs. Mirna Sabbah Hoballah, for her tremendous efforts and never ending devotion and support.

Proceeds of fundraising at this event of LBCF and NKBCI Breast Cancer Center of Excellence will enable us to support more patients. Special thanks go to major sponsors Mrs. Maha Shair on behalf of Dar Al-Handassah, HE Mrs. Leila Solh on behalf of Al-Waleed Bin Talal Humanitarian Foundation, Chateaux Musar, Sannine, Kayrouz Bakeries, Dr. Salwa Ghaddar Younes Foundation, Malia Group, Mrs. Hind Siblani and all our supporters and attendees.

The Breast Center of Excellence at AUBMC Holds Its 5th Annual Beirut Breast Cancer Conference AUBMC BBCC-5

Under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, HE Mr. Ghasan Hasbani, the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute Breast Center of Excellence, Clinical and Professional Development Center (CPDC), and Continuing Medical Education (CME) Office at the American University of Beirut Medical Center held the 5th Annual Beirut Breast Cancer Conference and discussed the latest advances and updates in breast cancer management. The conference which was held on February 9, 10, and 11 at the Gefinor Rotana Hotel was in collaboration with the Lebanese Order of Physicians (LOP), Lebanese Society of Medical Oncology, Lebanese Society of General Surgery, Lebanese Society of Radiology, American College of Surgeons –Lebanon Chapter and Order of Nurses in Lebanon. The Opening Ceremony was held in the format of a debate that was opened by Professor Nagi El Saghir, Director of Breast Center of Excellence at AUBMC and Conference Chair, and Professor Raymond Sayegh, President of LOP and representative of Minister of Public Health and was led by Journalist Roula Mouawad. It highlighted the pivotal role of breast cancer awareness and screening campaigns done by physicians, societies, NGOs and Ministry of Public Health, in producing a significant positive impact on breast cancer in Lebanon. Debate emphasized importance of proper management of breast cancer patients all over Lebanon and Arab countries.

Any patient who presents with a tumor in her breast should not have surgery and mastectomy right away. The patient should have radiology imaging and biopsy before any surgery. Patients with small tumors can have a partial mastectomy with radiation and not removal of her whole breast. Patients who have large tumors are given chemotherapy to make the tumor smaller then surgery. Patients are better treated if their cases are discussed by groups of specialists including medical oncologists, surgeons, radiologists, pathologists, and nurses in what we call Tumor Boards. BBCC-5 held daily Tumor Boards' discussions of patients and recommended that every hospital which treats cancer patients in Lebanon should organize weekly Tumor Boards to discuss their patients and offer them better treatments.

Presentations at BBCC 5 included a study conducted at AUB showing that over 80-90% of the patients with early stage breast cancer were well and cured after 5-10 years. The conference included special sessions on Oncology Nursing, Oncology Pharmacy and NGO work pertaining to national cancer control, raising public awareness about breast health, and patient advocacy. In addition, the BBCC-5 conference included lectures on the latest international cancer research as well as sessions on cancer research, epidemiology, genetic studies and chemotherapy in Lebanon presented by young researchers at AUBMC and Saint Joseph University in Lebanon.

Almost 250 participants and 40 speakers from different multidisciplinary fields including physicians, nurses, researchers, scientists, and patient advocates attended the event. Speakers included experts from USA, Switzerland, Belgium, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. At the end of the meeting, prizes were given to four young Lebanese physicians for best research abstracts.



Visitors to NKBCI

- January 2017 - Dr. Robert Gale, Visiting Professor of Hematology at the Hematology Research Center, Division of Experimental Medicine, Department of Medicine, Imperial College London and Honorary Professor of Hematology at the Institute of Hematology at Peking Union Medical College visited the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) and gave a grand round lecture on "History of Bone Marrow Transplantation".



- February 2017 - Faculty from Memorial Sloan Kettering headed by Dr. Ghassan Abou Alfa visited the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) and discussed the programs and activities of the Institute.



- March 2017 – Dr. Tracy Batchelor, Chief of Neuro-Oncology at the Massachusetts General Hospital, visited the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) to review our Neuro- Oncology program and provide proposal / recommendations for further development and expansion. Dr. Batchelor met with different departments including Neurology, Hematology Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Radiology, Pathology, Surgery and Neurosurgery. During his visit, Dr. Batchelor presented a special lecture entitled "Targeted Therapy for Brain Tumors".



2016 Prince Saud Bin Naif Award for Cancer Research

On March 3, 2017, Dr. Deborah Mukherji was awarded 3rd prize in the 2016 Prince Saud Bin Naif Award for Cancer Research. The award ceremony was held at the Phoenicia Hotel in Beirut and was presented by the Saudi Cancer Foundation. A delegation from the Saudi Cancer Foundation including board member HE Mr. Mazen El Saeed and the chair of the Award Scientific Committee, Dr. Ibrahim Al Sheneber as well as Director of Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI), Dr. Hassan El Solh and Head of the Division of Hematology/Oncology, Dr. Ali Shamseddine gave several speeches for the occasion.

Dr. Mukherji has a special interest in gastrointestinal and genitourinary malignancy; the prize was awarded in recognition of a recent publication from her team: PD-L1 expression in muscle-invasive bladder cancer cystectomy specimens and lymph node metastasis: A reliable treatment selection biomarker? Mukherji D, Jabbour M, Saroufim M, Temraz S, Nasr R, Charafeddine M, Assi R, Shamseddine A, Tawil A. Clinical Genitourinary Cancer 2016 Apr;14(2):183-7. The award will fund further translational and collaborative research at NKBCI, AUBMC.



The Cancer Prevention and Control Program at the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) celebrates World Cancer Day

February 4th is World Cancer Day worldwide. The Cancer Prevention and Control Program at Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute (NKBCI) in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Center and AMALOUNA conducted a series of awareness activities in Beirut Souks as well as AUBMC, Issam Fares Lecture Hall. The main aim was to inspire action: action to know more about cancer, prevent it, and support cancer research!



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