

## **AUBMC Launches Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Campaign in Northern Lebanon**

**(February 3, 2016) Beirut, Lebanon** – The American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) in collaboration with the Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center and Friends of MS at AUBMC, and Byblos Municipality, launched the Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Campaign in Byblos.

Held on Saturday, January 30, 2016 at the Centre Culturel de Byblos, the press conference aimed at raising awareness about Multiple Sclerosis among the Byblos community and the surrounding region. The event was attended by Mr. Ziad Hawat, president of Byblos municipality, Dr. Samia Khoury, director of Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center and Abou Haidar Neuroscience Institute - Associate Dean for Clinical and Translational research at AUBMC, Mrs. Roula Douaidy representing friends of MS, and representatives of local NGOs and universities.

In his opening note, Mr. Hawat stressed on the importance of such campaigns and the role of municipalities in maintaining a healthy community in their own villages and cities.

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease where the body's immune system attacks myelin, the protective covering of nerves in the central nervous system. MS affects women twice as often as men. While MS is not hereditary, scientists believe the disease is triggered by environmental factors in a person who is genetically predisposed to respond.

Defining MS and highlighting its signs and symptoms, Dr. Samia Khoury covered the latest progress achieved in research and treatment. Dr. Khoury also highlighted the importance of the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health and the NSSF especially when it comes to dispensing medications and patient coverage. She also stressed the need for awareness about the disease in all Lebanese regions, since this will have tremendous positive outcomes on its treatment. Professor Khoury emphasized that raising awareness and supporting patients cannot be done without the help and back up of "Friends of MS" at AUBMC.

Mrs. Roula Douaidy explained the pivotal role Friends of MS is playing, their mission in supporting needy MS patients at the Center, raising awareness about the disease and providing financial aid in MS ongoing research. In her note, Mrs. Douaidy highlighted the achievements fulfilled over the years and the future awareness activities they have lined up in Byblos.

The Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center at AUBMC will work closely with the local community. A future collaboration with Byblos universities, schools and NGOs will include

the organization of a bigger awareness conference for NGOs, universities and schools in the area.

“It is with knowledge we can protect ourselves and assist others, and that is the right way to fight any disease. Community outreach is at the core of AUBMC’s values, we have a mission to equip people with the right knowledge to be and stay healthy in order to build a healthy community. This comes hand in hand with our promise to offer the best medical and patient care to our community and beyond,” concluded Dr. Khoury.

**End**

### **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 four international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, CAP, and ACGME-I 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 health care needs of over 360,000 patient visits annually.

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