

AUBMC Launches Focus Fund at the Third Annual Conference of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Program and the Abu-Haidar Neuroscience Institute

First child mental health fund in Lebanon and the Arab region

(February 22, 2016) Beirut, Lebanon – Under the title of “School Mental and Behavioral Health: ADHD, Learning Disorders and Comorbidities” the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Program at the Department of Psychiatry at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), in collaboration with Abu-Haidar Neuroscience Institute (AHNI), organized their third annual conference on Friday, February 12, 2016 at AUB Hostler Auditorium.

The conference marked the launching of the ‘Focus Fund’, a newly established child mental health fund at AUBMC to empower and effectively care for children with emotional, behavioral, and learning disorders. This endeavor will be the first endowed mental health fund in Lebanon and the Arab region dedicated to improving children’s mental wellbeing, emotional resilience, and quality learning by focusing on the child, family, professionals, schools and community.

The event was attended by Dr. Ziad Nahas, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at AUBMC, Dr. Fadi Maalouf, chairman of the organizing committee of the conference and director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Program, Dr. Samia Khoury, Associate Dean for Clinical and Translational Research and Director of the Abu-Haidar Neuroscience Institute (AHNI) and the Nehme and Therese Tohme Multiple Sclerosis Center, representing Mohamed H. Sayegh, Executive Vice President, Raja N. Khuri Dean, Faculty of Medicine at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Mrs. Ghina Smadi, president of Focus Fund.

National, regional and prominent international speakers from the UK and the Netherlands and professionals who work with children with emotional, behavioral and learning difficulties including psychiatrists, psychologists, and other members of a multidisciplinary team in addition to school counselors and concerned parents joined the conference.

In his opening speech, Dr. Fadi Maalouf welcomed the audience and stressed on the importance of such conferences to secure the right approach and treatment for children with ADHD, learning disorder and their comorbidities, “We are proud of the achievements the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Program has accomplished over the past three years. This wouldn’t have been possible without the support of so many, and the foremost the support of AUBMC leadership for believing in our work.”

Several topics were covered during the event ranging from neurobiology to non-medical treatments, cultural challenges and practical tips that can be used in the classroom which made this annual conference relevant to various professionals who work with children and adolescents within and outside the school setting. The conference also highlighted the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to clinical problems, focusing on the most recent evidence-based assessments and interventions for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and learning disorders.

In her speech, Mrs. Smadi highlighted the importance of Focus Fund in supporting parents and children in their journey with mental health issues and added, "Mental health problems can lead young people to being disruptive, difficult, withdrawn and disturbed, and it's vital they are supported and not just ignored or told off. Our children need your support; without doubt, creating more programs will result in emotionally resilient and happier children."

Launching the Focus Fund, Dr. Samia Khoury said, "I am honored to be here to witness the launch of a fund whose mission is to improve the emotional resilience, mental health and learning experiences of children throughout Lebanon." She added, "I am confident that AUBMC will build on the fundamental role the fund will significantly play in laying the foundations for other similar funds that would make the care for children with diagnosable social, emotional, behavioral and learning problems available, affordable, and accessible."

'Focus' is a group of volunteers dedicated to improving the emotional resilience, mental health and learning experiences of children throughout Lebanon by actively engaging with parents, teachers, professionals and policymakers to deliver comprehensive and adequate care for those in need while making treatment available, affordable, and accessible.

The program featured an awareness video clip indicating that up to 25% of adolescents living in Beirut suffer from an emotional, behavioral or learning disorder while only 6% of those needing treatment receive it.

The fund will help train primary care professionals and pediatricians to identify mental health problems in children and provide general mental health education to parents, in an effort to make cases accessible to all. It will also educate teachers by promoting the teaching of life skills and building emotional resilience in schools, supporting projects that aim to develop and adapt these programs, enhancing positive parenting, introducing the needed skills to parents of children with difficulties, and supporting families of children in need of seeking mental health and/or special education interventions at AUBMC, in order to have mental healthcare affordable for all.

Following the core of their commitment to child mental health, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Program (CAPP) and Focus Fund, will organize three annual awareness events, targeting professionals, teachers and parents in the course of 2016.

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.

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

Ketchum Raad Middle East

Suzan Bou Dargham, Account Director – 00961 3 690505 – Email: suzan.dargham@ketchum-raad.com