

AUBMC Cardiac Electrophysiology Team Performs a Novel Operation in Lebanon Using Subcutaneous Defibrillator Implantation

A first in Lebanon and the region

(February 02, 2016) Beirut, Lebanon – The cardiac electrophysiology team at the Department of Internal Medicine at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) performed on Friday, January 22, 2016 the first subcutaneous defibrillator implantation in Lebanon and the region, a procedure useful in preventing sudden death in patients with or at risk for cardiac arrest.

The procedure was performed by Dr. Bernard Abi-Saleh and Dr. Bernard Harbieh at AUBMC on a 19 -year -old young man with several attacks of ventricular tachycardia reaching 240 beats per minute and near cardiac arrest episodes found to have a genetic condition called arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia (ARVD), a rare form of cardiomyopathy in which the heart muscle of the right ventricle is infiltrated by fatty tissue.

Dr. Abi-Saleh said, “Defibrillators detect rapid and dangerous heart rhythms and shock the heart back into normal rhythm when the patient’s heart beats abnormally fast (ventricular tachyarrhythmias). The S-ICD is best used for young patients, as well as patients with occlusions of their subclavian veins especially dialysis patients.”

The novel therapy addresses patients with risk for sudden cardiac arrest, particularly young individuals in whom the lifetime risk of device-related complications may be deemed to be unacceptably high by implanting a device completely under the skin without invading the vessels or the heart. Demonstrating exceptionally high safety and efficacy, the state-of-the-art technology has been increasingly used in the US and Europe and has been newly introduced in Lebanon and very few other countries in the region.

With subcutaneous ICD the heart is untouched; “not only does it involve placing the lead under the skin, rather than directly into the heart hence preventing perforation of the heart, which by itself is another complication associated with traditional ICDs, but it also does not carry the risk of bleeding or puncturing the lung,” added Dr. Abi-Saleh. The subcutaneous ICD is also the best option in the case of heart infection as its extraction does not involve the heart since its lead does not invade the heart.

Cosmetically, the subcutaneous defibrillator is a more appropriate option than the traditional defibrillator since it is implanted under the armpit and is very hard to be noticed in comparison to traditional ICDs usually implanted over the left upper corner of the chest and easily detected on a bare chest.

“The S-ICD is a great innovation providing an alternative to treat patients with life-threatening heart arrhythmias for whom the routine ICD placement procedure is not ideal,” said Dr. Maurice Khoury, Director of cardiac electrophysiology at AUBMC.

The cardiology division at AUBMC led by Dr. Samir Alam is the first in Lebanon to implant the S-ICD System and this procedure is yet another proof of AUBMC achieving its 2020 Vision by being a leading medical center in Lebanon and the region.

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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 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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