

AUBMC, Champs Fund and Ministry of Youth & Sports Discuss Sudden Cardiac Arrest in Young Athletes

A Seminar Revealing Causes and Presenting Preventive Measures

(September 17, 2014) Beirut, Lebanon – On Friday, August 29, the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), Champs Fund (The Hicham El Hage Program for Young Hearts & Athletes Health), and Ministry of Youth & Sports organized for the first time in Lebanon, a seminar around “Sudden Cardiac Arrest in Young Athletes” at the Hisham Jaroudi Auditorium, Hariri School of Nursing, American University of Beirut. The seminar discussed sudden death in young athletes during training or on the field and the necessary preventive measures against this rare occurrence.

The seminar was held in the presence of his Excellency Army Commander, Abdul-Muttaleb Al-Hinawi, Minister of Youth and Sports, and was attended by representatives from ministry of public health, world health organization and representatives from various sports leagues and sports clubs in Lebanon, and members of the AUB and AUBMC leadership and community.

Dr. Ghassan Hamadeh, Associate Dean for Ambulatory Programs, IT and CME, Chairman of the Department of Family Medicine, and moderator of the event, opened the session with a short introduction highlighting the importance of such seminars and the pioneering role of AUBMC in discussing new topics which have an impact on the health of our community.

The event started with a presentation by Dr. Marwan Refaat, Assistant professor of Medicine, Cardiovascular Medicine and Cardiac Electrophysiology at AUBMC, on the prevalence and burden of sudden cardiac death. In his presentation, Dr. Refaat highlighted the various causes leading to a sudden cardiac arrest and which often occur due to hidden heart defects or overlooked heart abnormalities such as Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM), a disease in which the heart muscle (myocardium) becomes abnormally thick making it harder for the heart to pump blood, Coronary Artery Abnormalities, an inborn abnormal connection of heart arteries, and Long QT Syndrome, an inherited heart rhythm disorder that can cause fast chaotic heartbeats.

This was followed by a presentation from Mr. Tarek Gherbal, Athletics Therapist- AUB University Sports, who shared AUB’s experience at Charles W. Hostler Student Center in the past six years and the measures taken to prevent and protect athletes from all health incidents. “AUB was the first university to make the pre-participation exam, including cardiac screening & electrocardiogram (EKG), mandatory for all AUB student athletes enrolled in varsity teams,” said Gherbal. This important milestone was launched and implemented by the Department of Family Medicine at AUBMC. Gherbal then shared two success stories in resuscitating student athletes with the Automated External Defibrillator (AED), and he highlighted the importance of having a sports center that’s medically well-equipped with a trained team.

Dr. Mona Osman El Hage, Instructor of Clinical Medicine, Department of Family Medicine, AUBMC, and the founder of the Champs Fund at AUBMC, then shed light on the Fund, highlighting the key milestones that must be achieved to provide a safe environment for young athletes. She also discussed the importance of collaboration amongst all the parties in attendance to provide the needed safety. Three key suggestions were put forward for discussion: making a periodic pre-participation medical exam mandatory for athletes in Lebanon, an exam that should include also a cardiac screening, and specifically, an electrocardiogram EKG, having an AED available in sports' fields, and finally, ensuring that sports' trainers are certified in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

"The American University of Beirut Medical Center and through its AUBMC's 2020 Vision is committed to be the leading academic medical center in Lebanon and the region by delivering excellence in patient-centered care, medical education, and research," said Dr. Ghazzal, Deputy Vice President Dean and Associate Dean for clinical affairs, AUBMC. "To accomplish this mission, multiple paths have been identified, one of which focuses on the development of programs and initiatives that improve the health of our community. Today's seminar and the Champs Fund are an example of this dedication. Sudden cardiac death is a tragic and unfortunate occurrence that takes away young athletes in their prime. Working with all the relevant and impactful stakeholders to lead the way in screening and raising awareness on this issue is a key element. This seminar is also a wonderful example of the strides that can be made when various entities within AUB and Lebanon work together to advance the health of our people," added Dr. Ghazzal.

The Minister of Sports and Youth Commander, Abdul-Muttaleb Al-Hinawi, commended AUBMC and Champs Fund's initiative for shedding light on such an important concern. "It is important to work together to put rules and regulations in place, find the right funds to make the needed equipment available to all, and then invest in training to complement the process," he added. The Minister ended his speech with a promise that the Ministry of Sports and Youth will offer its support to achieve what's needed.

The floor was then opened for discussion focusing on the possibility of making the suggested ideas feasible, taking into consideration the associated costs and limited budget. Champs Fund presented several solutions, one of which was an initiative the Fund worked on, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, to carry out the pre-participation exam in its network of primary health care centers at an affordable cost. "To achieve this, the Champs Fund organized a training session for doctors in family medicine, general practitioners and cardiologists from 27 centers on pre-participation exam and EKG reading for athletes," commented Dr. Osman El Hage.

An agreement to form task forces in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports & Youth, the Ministry of Public Health, the ministry of higher education, the Olympic Committee and representatives from sports leagues and clubs to follow up on the different suggestions presented was reached. Suggestions included making pre-participation exam (including cardiac screening) mandatory, identifying solutions to having an AED available on all sports fields, and

ensuring reduced cost of AEDs, providing CPR certification of sports trainers, raising awareness among the public, building a culture of screening, and preventing sudden cardiac death among the sports community.

As part of this year's awareness activities, Champs Fund will be organizing a "Back to School Free Heart Screening" program between September 17, 2014 and November 30, 2014, during which all school & university students aged 12 to 24 who are or are planning to be members of varsity teams will get a medical consultation, blood pressure check and EKG. Screenings will be available every Wednesday & Saturday by appointment. For further information or to book your appointment, please call AUBMC 01-350000 extension 3000.

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For more information, please visit our website www.aubmc.org or contact

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Note to Editors

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 first medical institution in the Middle East to have earned the three international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, and CAP, attesting to its superior standards in patient-centered care, nursing, and pathology/laboratory services.

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 300,000 patient visits annually.

About Champs Fund

"Champs Fund: the Hicham El Hage Program for Young Hearts& Athletes Health" is a charitable fund established in April 2014 within the Department of Family Medicine at the American University of Beirut Medical Center. The fund was established in memory of Hicham El Hage, a 15

years old young athlete who collapsed on the field while practicing football with his school team on May 1, 2010 due to an undiagnosed hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Champs Fund aims at preventing sudden cardiac death in young athletes through advocating for mandatory cardiac screening of athletes, raising public awareness regarding cardiac risk in the young, and ensuring better preparedness of sports' fields.