

## 2017 Middle East Medical Assembly Discovers Conflict Medicine: The First Global Congress on Conflict Medicine

Innovation, initiative, and sheer controlled risk-taking have marked the growth of the American University of Beirut's School of Medicine, ever since its humble beginnings one year after the inauguration of the Syrian Protestant College in 1866. A number of medical firsts and surprising breakthroughs have kept pace with the ongoing development of the school until the present day. Among these successes was the creation of the Middle East Medical Assembly (MEMA) itself, which is an annual internationally renowned medical conference that brings to Beirut outstanding physicians of the world and provides undoubtedly up-to-date educational opportunities to physicians from the entire the region.

This year, and as part of its annual ongoing tradition, the American University of Beirut (AUB) organized the 48<sup>th</sup> Middle East Medical Congress (MEMA) 2017, with a new direction holding the first global congress on conflict medicine, focusing on the management of conflict related injuries including but not limited to the pathological, psychological, nursing, nephrological, surgical, oncological, and social manifestations of war wounds.

MEMA 2017 built on evidence-based knowledge and practice aimed to provide a platform for the exchange of experience and expertise between regional and international health practitioners (from civilian, academic, and military fields). Held in partnership with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other organizations such as "Medecins Sans Frontieres" (MSF), and regional governmental agencies, it also created the setting to forge partnerships between the different stakeholders in providing solutions that ameliorate the consequences of conflict.

Dr. Kaddoura, MEMA Chairperson said: "Global and regional conflicts are affecting all humanity. Medical Institutions should not enjoy the luxury of distancing

themselves from it, but they should empower their future students to get involved following the footsteps of the American University of Beirut."

MEMA's exhibition and rich program spread over four days and featured various sessions and workshops about recent advances in the field along with experiences from both the military and civilian fields in applying this knowledge to different environments from the field hospital to the teaching hospital. Other topics included reconstructive surgery and the challenges of reconstructing and rehabilitating the war injured patient, infectious diseases and microbiology, which explored the growing threat of multidrug resistant bacteria in war wounds. In addition, women's health, mental health, the burden of cancer during conflict, the burden of kidney dialysis during conflict, training and educating health professionals to deal with the challenges of war children with disabilities during conflict, Emergency Medicine, war injuries and finally clinical signs of torture were also discussed during the different sessions.

Dr. Mohamed H. Sayegh noted the importance of serving the goal of supporting the provision of health services while studying the health consequences of conflict in a region of turmoil. He said: "Our purpose as a leading medical center extends beyond providing healthcare to providing it with advancement and compassion. Supporting the health of local and regional patients in need by ensuring their access to care is at the core of our 2020 Vision. The next step is for us to collate all of the efforts to develop and refine the implementation strategies, transparently, deliberately and inclusively."

As a pioneer driver and promoter of cutting-edge research, AUBMC's historical endeavors and efforts in academic teaching, clinical care, and research continue to be of first class quality. AUBMC today maintains its role as a reference center in the region at large.

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