

50 Years of Excellence & 1000th Bone Marrow Transplant in AUBMC



The Bone Marrow Transplant (BMT) procedure, one of the most complex medical procedures, has been witnessing major progress in recent years, and is frequently the only curative option in the treatment of benign and malignant hematological and genetic diseases among others.

The BMT Program at the American University of Beirut was founded in 1998 and a specialized Transplant Unit was established in 2004. This program has outgrown to become the largest center in Lebanon with more than 100 procedures performed annually for treating patients aged between 1 and 75 years.

In 2016, the center received the JACIE accreditation and became the only accredited BMT Program in the Levant and one of two accredited programs in the Arab World whereas 40% of the European Centers haven't received the accreditation yet.

The BMT at AUBMC serves as a structure that combines several medical specialties in serving the patients (In addition to adult and pediatric transplanters, the program involves Laboratory Medicine, Radiology, Infectious Disease, Pulmonary Medicine, Gastroenterology, Emergency Medicine, and Surgery specialists among others). The

Program collaborates with Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute, Hematology/Oncology Division, Department of Internal Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, the Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon (CCCL), and Hematologists/Oncologists of Lebanon and the region in addition to Institutions and individuals who have provided financial support to the transplant program and those that assisted patients in performing these procedures.

In terms of results, to cite few examples, BMT was performed for more than 300 Lymphoma patients at AUBMC, with a 5 years survival rate reaching 55% compared to only 10% expected survival if the transplant was not performed. Similarly, more than 150 Multiple Myeloma patients underwent transplantation, 60% of whom remained alive beyond 10 years post-procedure. These outstanding results exceed the reported average of transplant centers in North America and Western Europe. Finally, for Acute Myeloid Leukemia patients, the 5-year survival rate post-transplant exceeded 55% compared to the expected 25-30% with chemotherapy only.

The AUBMC BMT Program is well recognized as one of the world's leading research centers for basic and clinical

research. The AUBMC BMT program is recognized as an International Transplant Center by the US National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP). This membership allows AUBMC BMT program the chance to provide matching donors from the International Donor Bank program. In addition, the center succeeded several years ago to introduce transplants from 50% matching donors (Haplo-Identical Transplant) offering the opportunity for almost every patient to have an available donor.

Finally, the BMT Program has set and modified the post-transplant consolidation and maintenance therapies designed specially to minimize the possibility of post-transplant recurrence. AUBMC BMT program was among the first centers to report the use of some targeted therapy on acute myeloid leukemia patients after their transplant. This resulted in impressive results that significantly raised the cure rate. These results have been presented in multiple international scientific conferences around the world and were adopted in most transplant centers and formed the basis of European guidelines.

The AUBMC 2020 Vision entails becoming the leading academic center in Lebanon and the region by delivering excellence in patient-centered care, outstanding education, and innovative research. As such, the hospital administration has made the BMT program a top priority in its expansion plan. The expansion plan will include 20

equipped rooms for Bone Marrow Transplant and work is underway to avail new treatment modalities such as CAR T-Cells immunotherapy (the second generation of cellular therapy).

AUBMC celebrated on August 30, 2019 a momentous occasion for crossing the 1000 bone marrow transplants with 80% patients being adults and 20 % being children. Held at the Issam Fares Lecture Hall, the event was organized by Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute under the leadership of Dr. Ali Taher, Director of the Institute, and Dr. Ali Bazarbachi, Director of the Bone Marrow Transplant Program with Dr. Jean el Cheikh, Master of the Ceremony, and the presence of Dr Mohamad Haidar representing his excellency the Minister of Public Health, Dr Jamil Jabak, Dr. Fadlo Khuri, AUB President, Dr. Miguel Abboud, Director of the Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant Program, patient survivors, families of patients, medical practitioners, and media representatives.

Celebrations featured a comedic performance by Mr. Hisham Haddad, followed by a solo song performance by Ms. Samia Harake, a motivational talk by Ms. Joumana Mansour, an open debate with cancer survivors led by Annahar editor, Ms. Rola Mouawad, a musical performance by BMT survivor, Tiyyarat Warak Band, cake celebration, and lighting of the Daniel ACC building. A scientific symposium on the latest updates in BMT gathered physicians from Lebanon and the region.

