

# A Century of Healing: The Story of the LAU Medical Center– Rizk Hospital

One hundred years ago, in the heart of Beirut, a young physician returning from Paris after completing his specialty, opened a clinic with just twelve beds and three nurses. That physician, Dr. Toufic Rizk, could hardly have imagined the journey his modest institution would take.

He met the partner of his life, Olga Toubia, and together they built a family deeply devoted to medicine and rooted in the medical field. Beyond his medical legacy, Dr. Toufic Rizk passed down his passion for healthcare to his four children: Assaad, Pierre, and Paul, who each became physicians, and Mona, who dedicated her career as a nurse surgical technologist.

From its beginnings as “Clinique Dr. Rizk” at Nasra Tramway Station in Sodeco in 1925, the hospital was destined to become a medical center associated with the Lebanese American University (LAU), thus evolving into more than a hospital: a sanctuary of care, a hub of medical innovation, and an essential pillar for the community.



By 1927, the “Clinique” had already outgrown its first home, moving to Ras-el-Nabeh, and by 1934, it found a larger space in Basta-al-Fawka.

Each move mirrored not only the hospital’s growth but also the growing trust of a city that relied on it. The hospital’s heartbeat was always its people: dedicated staff, compassionate nurses, and the nuns who joined in the 1950’s, bringing warmth and care beyond the walls of the operating theater.

In 1957, a defining chapter began with the inauguration of the Achrafieh site with Building A. President Camille Chamoun’s visit marked the hospital’s rising prominence.

This growth was made possible not only through medical dedication but also thanks to the constant moral and financial support of Dr. Toufic Rizk’s brother, Abdallah Bey Rizk. Italian nuns from the “Order of Franciscans of the Immaculate Heart of Mary,” and later the “Choueirite Sisters from Khenchara,” became enduring members of the team, embodying the philosophy that care is as much about heart as it is about skills.



The 1960s and 1970s saw a new generation join the mission.

Dr. Assaad Rizk, son of the founder, returned from Paris, where he trained as an Intern and Resident in Urology and served as an Associate Professor of Urology in France. Stepping into leadership alongside his father, he modernized the hospital’s services and opened one of Lebanon’s first Hemodialysis centers.



In 1971, the “Rizk Foundation” launched Lebanon’s first non-profit Blood Bank, later becoming the “Lebanese Center for Blood Transfusion,” a lifeline for countless patients and a symbol of the hospital’s commitment to public health. Through Lebanon’s civil war, the hospital stood firm, never closing a single day. During those difficult years, a new Building B rose amidst the chaos, opening to patients despite the war — a moving symbol of resilience and unwavering commitment to care. The hospital also continued to innovate, pioneering the country’s first Kidney Transplant Program in 1985 and leading a series of medical firsts in the 1990s, including advanced Interventional Cardiology procedures such as coronary stents, TIPS and percutaneous mitral valve dilatation.

In 1990, the hospital further reinforced its leadership in transplantation by joining the “National Organ Program,” a pivotal



step strengthening its role in advancing organ donation and life-saving surgeries in Lebanon. In 1991, the third generation of the Rizk family, represented by Sami Rizk, son of Dr. Assaad Rizk, joined the management team. His involvement marked a new chapter of leadership and a continuation of the family’s vision and legacy. Together, they built both, Buildings C and D, furthering the hospital’s growth and mission of continuous advancement in healthcare.



The turn of the millennium brought further transformation through the vision of the third generation. In 2002, the hospital unveiled Lebanon’s first rooftop helipad, marking another milestone in its pioneering journey. The hospital also became the first ISO 9001 Certified medical center in Lebanon and introduced advanced surgeries such as spine surgery, vertebral replacements, and minimally invasive hip procedures, reflecting its commitment to cutting-edge care. In 2008, the hospital expanded its footprint by acquiring an adjacent building to accommodate future growth.

The acquisition of the hospital by the Lebanese American University in 2009 marked another milestone, anchoring the hospital’s dual mission of clinical excellence and academic leadership. This historic step was made possible thanks to the mutual trust, friendship, and understanding between Dr. Joseph Jabra and Dr. Assaad Rizk. Their shared vision ensured the hospital remained an essential hub for continuous medical education for young physicians, safeguarding the sustainability of medical excellence.



In recent years, following the appointment of Mr. Sami Rizk as CEO, the LAU Medical Center – Rizk Hospital has continued to lead healthcare in Lebanon with innovation, compassion, and unwavering dedication. Despite immense challenges, from the national economic crisis, to the Beirut Port Blast on August 4th, 2020, to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Israeli war on Lebanon in 2024, the hospital never wavered. It remained open at all times, providing essential care to its community and the Lebanese population at large. These moments highlighted the perseverance, teamwork, and steadfast commitment of LAU Medical Center–Rizk Hospital’s staff.

University hospitals have consistently played a cornerstone role during all these recent crises, serving as a backbone of the Lebanese healthcare system.



Alongside this enduring dedication, the academic medical center has achieved key milestones in medical excellence:

- In 2018, the first Comprehensive Stroke Center opened, marking a turning point in patient survival and recovery.
- In 2020, the LAU Mobile Clinic Program began bringing PCR testing, health awareness, and essential medical services directly to underserved communities. That same year, a new ENT Department expanded specialized care.
- In 2021, a state-of-the-art newly renovated Emergency Department welcomed patients, equipped with advanced imaging and rapid-response capabilities.
- In 2022, Lebanon’s first Hybrid Operating Room opened, blending surgical precision with advanced imaging technology.
- In 2025, the Executive Health Prevention Program (EHPP) launched alongside the complete renovation of Building D, a modern facility designed for cutting-edge treatments and surgical techniques.

For a century, LAU Medical Center – Rizk Hospital has been more than a collection of buildings and technologies. It has been a major partner to the community, a training ground for generations of medical professionals, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and more, and a place where compassion and expertise meet at the forefront of patient care excellence.

It has been an academic medical center that heals not just bodies but also hearts, always present for its people, extending its reach through leading outreach programs across the country, and standing as a refuge in times of need, a true beacon of hope. More than a hospital, it has become a Lebanese heritage landmark, deeply woven into the nation’s modern history, carrying forward a legacy of care, resilience, and service to generations.

As LAU Medical Center – Rizk Hospital celebrates its 100th year, it carries forward a legacy built on courage, care, and innovation, remaining unwaveringly by the side of those it serves, ready to face the challenges of tomorrow while honoring the past. With new building expansions and state-of-the-art facilities on the horizon, the hospital looks to the next century with determination to grow, innovate, and continue shaping the future of healthcare in Lebanon and the region.

**A century of care. A legacy of compassion. A future devoted to life, health, and hope.**

