# NKBCI NEWSLETTER

**JULY - SEPTEMBER 2022** 







# **AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS** Dr. Ziad Salem, a legacy that inspires others to dream more, do more, and become more Emirates Oncology Society Awards Dr. Naji El-Saghir Congrats to our Doctors **AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS -**Sarcoma Awareness Month Myeloproliferative Neoplasms Awareness Day FOR HER Patient Support Workshop Emphasized Hope and Reality of Life with Breast Cancer **FUNDRAISING EVENTS** Cancer Support Fund at AUBMC Welcomes People to People Aid and U.S. Ambassador Dorothy Shea **SCIENTIFIC EVENTS** NKBCI receives a Medical Education Grant from Pfizer and Merck Initiation of Molecular Tumor Board BEYOND, a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial of the newest disease modifying 20 drug for beta-thalassemia, Luspatercept IN THE SPOTLIGHT **PUBLICATIONS**



# FAREWELL DR. ZIAD SALEM

# Dr. Ziad Salem, a legacy that inspires others to dream more, do more, and become more

On August 11, 2022, the Naef K. Basil Cancer Institute (NKBCI) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) honored Dr. Ziad Salem for more than 40 years of utmost dedication in serving AUB and its medical center and for his great contributions to the Hematology Oncology Division. Ever since the directorship of Dr.Taher at NKBCI, Dr. Ziad Salem had gracefully donated all his clinical income to serve NKBCI, its staff, and its operations, while he remained practicing with the same clinical excellence, work ethics, work hours and dedication he has always maintained, beyond the call of duty.

The ceremony was attended by AUB President Fadlo R. Khuri, Raja N. Khuri Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Vice President for Medical Affairs Raymond Sawaya, Executive Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and Chairperson of the Department of Internal Medicine Fuad Ziyadeh, Associate Vice President for Advancement and Communications and Director of NKBCI Ali Taher, Head of Hematology Oncology and Director of Breast Center of Excellence Nagi El Saghir, the Salem family, a number of dignitaries, and members of the AUB and AUBMC community.







# **Dr. Ziad Salem**Short Biography

Dr. Salem has led the Hematology Oncology Division and evolved it into a world-class division that became reference for Lebanon and the region. He attained his MD from AUB in 1973 and earned his residency degree in 1975. He earned the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society in 1972. He joined AUB as an assistant professor of internal medicine and laboratory medicine in 1980 and served as head of the Hematology Oncology Division from 1986 till 2001 and head of the tumor registry at AUBMC from 1987 till 1990. In 1993, he was promoted to associate professor of clinical medicine. He won the Salim El-Hoss Humanism and Professionalism Award in 2014, as well as the Special Merit Award of the Department of Internal Medicine in 2019.



# Emirates Oncology Society Awards Dr. Naji El-Saghir

In its 3rd Annual Conference September 2- 3 2022, the Emirates Oncology Society (EOS) awarded Dr. Naji El-Saghir the "EOS Lifetime Achievement MENA Oncology Award" for his dedication and contribution to the oncology field. This conference collaborated with eminent faculty from MD Anderson Cancer Center, to bring latest advances in the management of various cancers, as well as the most efficient models for implementing these updates into clinical practice. The conference heavily relied on digital platforms in presentations, discussions and analysis which allowed for a successful digital experience for all participants.





# Congrats to our Doctors





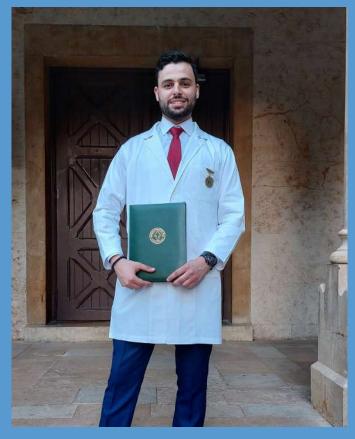
# Jean El Cheikh

American University of Beirut Medical Center
Beirut , Lebanon

Associate Editor
Cell and Stem Cell Transplantation

# Dr. Jean El-Chiekh

was promoted to Associated Editor in the journal of Cell and Stem Cells Transplantation in Frontiers, added to his already existing role as Associate Editor in the journal of Hematologic Malignancies also in Frontiers for the past years.



**Dr. Mohammad Hasan Hodroj**was elected to the membership of AUB
Chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha
Honor Medical Society. This decision
was based on his excellent academic
and professional performance and on
his potential for a distinguished career
in the medical profession.





# AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



# Sarcoma Awareness Month

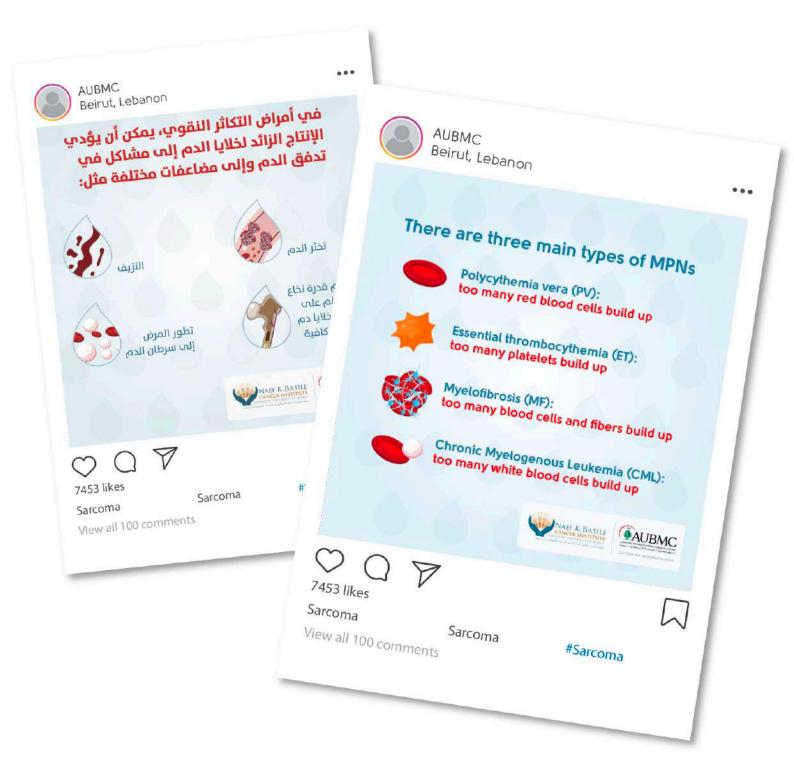
During the Sarcoma Awareness month of July, the NKBCI posted a series of awareness pitches on its social media platforms. A sarcoma is a rare type of cancerous tumor that develops in bone and connective tissue, such as fat, muscle, blood vessels, nerves, and the tissue that surrounds bones and joints.



# Myeloproliferative Neoplasms Awareness Day

Myeloproliferative Neoplasms (MPNs) are a group of rare cancers in which too many abnormal red blood cells, white blood cells or platelets develop in the bone marrow. MPNs are more commonly diagnosed in older people, and to a lesser extent in younger ones

On the occasion of the MPN awareness day (September 9), Dr. Iman Abou Dalle Assistant Professor in Malignant Hematology at NKBCI, held a patient educational workshop to improve their knowledge on diagnosis, prognosis, and symptoms management. This workshop acted as a venue that successfully solicited patient interaction. As such, patients were bold in sharing about their varied experiences in the symptoms they face in their day-to-day life like itching, insomnia, and boney pain. As a result of the workshop, participants agreed to create a hub for patient support and to meet yearly to exchange their struggles, updates and successes.



In addition to therapeutic innovations and concerns about availability and access to proper disease management and medication for all patients, the oncology community—especially the breast medical oncology community—has become more attentive lately to quality-of-life issues that patients with cancer face.

In that line, the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation (LBCF) has been organizing support group meetings and workshops for patients with advanced breast cancer regularly for the last 10 years. Lately, LBCF resumed its in-person activities and organized a workshop for patients and caregivers called FOR HER, supported by SciencePRO and sponsored by Pfizer. The workshop included formal lectures, question-and-answer sessions, and an open forum for discussion between a faculty composed of two oncologists, Dr. Naji ElSaghir and Dr. Fadi Nasr, from Saint Joseph University in Beirut, psychologist Hiba Salem from AUBMC, sex therapist Sandrine Atallah, life coach Grace Khleif, oncology nurse Latifa Shihab, nurse and breast oncology specialist Rebecca El-Asmar, and breast cancer survivor and new president of LBCF Mirna Sabbah Hoballah, with an audience of breast cancer survivors, advocates, patients, and caregivers.

It was amazing to see how eager patients were to hear about recent advances in therapy as well as dealing with effects of cancer diagnosis and metastasis on their lives. They expressed gratitude knowing that a multidisciplinary team is involved in making plans of treatment for them and for following up on their care. Emotional and sexual issues for patients with advanced breast cancer and their partners were openly discussed. Acceptance, coping, and adjusting to breast anatomical changes, body image, and premature menopause were debated. It was obvious that relationships with family members and children, management of family conflicts, daily schedules, and social activities matter a lot and should be openly discussed and supported.

This workshop that included medical teams as well as patients, caregivers, survivors, and advocates was a great learning experiences for all parties.





# FUNDRAISING EVENTS

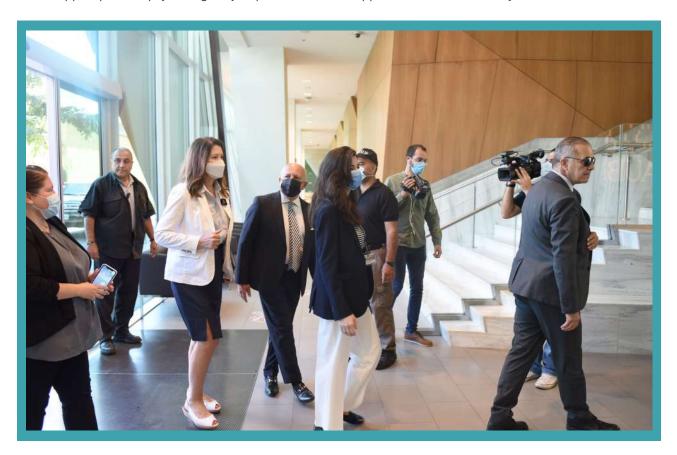


# Cancer Support Fund at AUBMC Welcomes People to People Aid and U.S. Ambassador Dorothy Shea

Beirut: The Cancer Support Fund at the American University of Beirut Medical Center was pleased to welcome People to People Aid founder Wasseem Kabbara and U.S. Ambassador Dorothy Shea as part of People to People Aid's donation of much-needed support for cancer patients. This donation, valued at more than \$1.4 million, is part of a \$5 million dollar global donation of chronic, psychotropic and cancer medications that arrived in Lebanon last week, and comes courtesy of People to People Aid in partnership with Direct Relief and MAP International.

On August 17, 2022, Ambassador Shea and Mr. Kabbara visited the Cancer Support Fund at AUBMC and were received by Ms. Hala Dahdah Abou Jaber, President and Founder of Cancer Support Fund, Mr. Joseph Otayek, AUBMC Medical Center Director, Dr. Imad Baalbaki, Senior Vice President for Advancement and Business Development, Dr. Kamal Badr Executive Associate Dean for Medical Education, Dr. Roni Zeeny, Director of Pharmacy and Ms Celine Abou Karam, Administrator Naef K Basile Cancer Institute and Cancer Support Fund and many of AUBMC renowned Hematologist Oncologist at the Center.

In her remarks, Ambassador Shea highlighted the help the Cancer Support Fund at AUBMC is providing adult cancer patients to sustain their treatment and to complete their recovery journey. The Cancer Support Fund also aims to support patients psychologically as part of its holistic approach towards recovery.



Ambassador Shea thanked People to People Aid, its founder Wasseem Kabbara, and its American nonprofit organization partners Direct Relief, MAP International, for their cooperation and coordination to contribute much-needed medications which support AUBMC and Lebanon in general.

AUBMC Medical Center Director Mr. Joseph Otayek mentioned the importance of the sustainability of healthcare services and thanked everyone for all the efforts done to support AUBMC's mission in Lebanon and to sustain healthcare services. He noted that "AUBMC has been supported since the start by generous donations from People to People Aid, Direct Relief, MAP international, and others that were essential to our operations and to our patients."

Ambassador Shea toured the Naef K. Basile Cancer Center and visited adult cancer patients who shared their challenging experience and their psychological suffering all due to medications shortage, expensive cost of treatment, lack of national coverage and of social security in addition to many other issues related to patient accessing appropriate and receiving adequate care.









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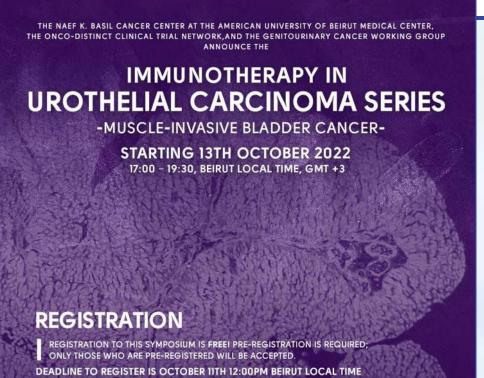
# SCIENTIFIC EVENTS



# NKBCI receives a Medical Education Grant from Pfizer and Merck

Pfizer EMD and Serono Merck have awarded NKBCI a Medical Education Grant in order to conduct Educational workshop series to increase healthcare professional knowledge of evidence-based treatment options for locally-advanced and metastatic urothelial carcinoma. Thus, strengthen capacity for prospective clinical data collection and future collaborative research. The first in the series of webinars to be held is planned for October.

Bladder cancer is the second most reported cancer among males in Lebanon and highly prevalent in the Middle East region in general. However, due to limited data from national cancer registries, stage at bladder cancer diagnosis and treatment outcomes are rarely reported. Moreover, healthcare practitioners in the Middle East region generally follow international guidelines, but no context-specific guidelines are readily available. As such, the NKBCI with its close ties with the King Hussein Cancer Center in Jordan and existing collaboration with the Oncodistinct Clinical Trials Network aim to improve local and regional capacity for collaborative clinical data collection and research involvement particularly in bladder cancer. The Medical Education Grant will assist it in moving closer to this goal.



THIS SERIES IS DESIGNED FOR UROLOGISTS AND ONCOLOGISTS IN PRACTICE OR IN TRAINING FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGION PLUS GULF CORPORATION COUNTRIES

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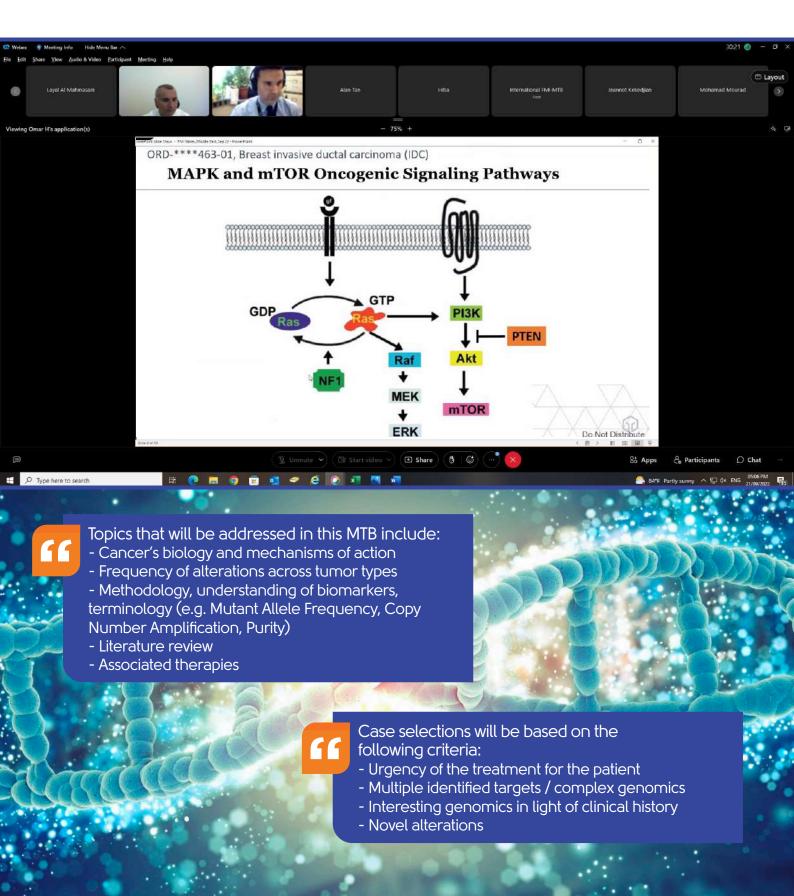
TARGET AUDIENCE



# Initiation of Molecular Tumor Board

The NKBCI and the Pathology and Laboratory Medicine Department at AUBMC capitalized on their strong relationship by initiating the First Molecular Multidisciplinary Tumor (MTB) Board in Lebanon with support from Roche and Accenture. The first MTB was held on September 21.

This Tumor Board is an educational service available for reviewing the Next Generation Sequencing Reports provided to the medical centers by providing insights from Foundation Medicine Inc. (FMI) experts on the genomic findings and their clinical implications. The MTB will be attended by two Foundation Medicine International experts: a Physician and a Genomicist and will be co-chaired by Dr Hazem Assi and Dr Rami Mahfouz.



# BEYOND, a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial of the newest disease modifying drug for beta-thalassemia, Luspatercept

LANCET Haematology (impact factor 30.153), the #1 Journal in Hematology, published the results of an international clinical trial (BEYOND) led by Dr. Ali Taher as principal investigator.

BEYOND is a randomized double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trial of the newest disease modifying drug for beta-thalassemia, Luspatercept, developed by Bristol Meyers Squibb (NY, USA). Luspatercept was already approved for transfusion-dependent patients [the BELIEVE trial published a year ago in NEJM with Dr. Taher as co-PI and third author. As a follow-up, the BEYOND trial came to confirm its efficacy and safety in non-transfusion-dependent patients to increase their hemoglobin levels and prevent morbidity and mortality.

One notes that over half of the cited references in the paper are actually from BHT Program previous studies, the team had been working to understand why these patients have so many clinical morbidities for over 10 years now, as summarized recently in Dr. Taher's NEJM review. So, concluding with the first treatment option for these patients is a historic milestone.

The trial is now being used to get approval of the drug in this indication in Europe, and discussions with EMA are ongoing. Accordingly, it is expected to be indicated in the Middle East sometime next year.





# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# Rola Kharrouby

# Q: When did you join the Naef K. Basil Cancer Institute?

A: July, 2015.

# Q: What is your job title?

A: Senior Registered Nurse.

## Q: What is your main responsibilities?

A: My responsibilities are:

Provide efficient nursing care to patients, prioritize responsibilities, anticipate needs, fulfill them. Provide support and professional supervision to nursing staff to ensure providing optimal care. Implement quality control measures by performing patient and environmental safety checking rounds.

### Q: Prior to joining this department, where were you working?

A: Inpatient Pediatric Medical Surgical Department "6 \_North"

## Q: Where did you pursue your College studies?

A: Lebanese University: Faculty of Public Health.

# Q: What do you like most about your job?

A: Helping to make hard thing a little less difficult.

### Q: What would you like to improve in your current job?

A: Aim to involve all the oncology patients in psychotherapy program. I believe that will ease their healing journey.

## Q: Tell us more about your ambition; in what would you like to develop your career?

A: I would like to continue master degree in psychology.

### Q: Where is the best trip destination and why?

A: The Maldives, it is irresistible with its emerald water, beautiful beaches, and colorful marine life.

### Q: What are your hobbies?

A: Swimming and photography.

### Q: What would be your best food choice?

A: Sushi.

### Q: Tell us more about your character.

A: Honest, dedicated, assertive, team player.

Q: What is your advice to your peers?

A: Always take care of yourselves, eat well, have enough sleeping, and exercise. You need to be strong to take the best care of others.

# Q: What is your message to cancer patients?

A: You are stronger than you know and Braver than you think.



# **PUBLICATIONS**



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