



**AMERICAN
UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
MEDICAL CENTER**

المركز الطبي في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Breakthrough in Cardiac Surgery: AUBMC Performs the First Successful Frozen Elephant Trunk Surgery in Lebanon

In a landmark achievement for cardiovascular medicine, the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) has successfully performed the country's first Frozen Elephant Trunk (FET) surgery, a highly complex, life-saving procedure used to treat extensive aortic disease. The procedure was led by Associate Professor Ziad Khabbaz, in collaboration with Associate Professor Pierre Sfeir, Head of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery, with the support of a multidisciplinary team of anesthesiologists, perfusionists, and critical care specialists.

FET surgery is a hybrid procedure that combines open surgical and endovascular techniques to repair the aorta—the body's main artery. It is most commonly used in cases of aortic dissection, aneurysm, or other complex pathologies involving both the ascending and descending thoracic aorta.

The term "frozen" refers to the stented graft inserted into the descending aorta during open surgery. Unlike the traditional non-stented—and thus free-floating—Dacron graft, which merely serves as a temporary bridge to a subsequent, highly complex and invasive surgery, the stented graft is intended as a definitive and final treatment for the diseased aortic segment. This stented graft stabilizes the artery, prevents rupture, and enables safer, less invasive interventions in the future.

The surgery marks a pivotal moment in Lebanon's medical history, highlighting both technological advancement and surgical expertise. The patient, an 80-year-old man diagnosed with a life-threatening distal aortic arch aneurysm, has fully recovered after the surgery and been discharged home.

Dr. Khabbaz commented, "This is a monumental step forward for cardiovascular care in Lebanon. Until now, patients with these conditions would have had to seek treatment abroad at great financial and personal cost or undergo a riskier two-step surgery. Today, we can provide world-class care right here at home."

The surgery lasted over six hours and required placing the patient on cardiopulmonary bypass as surgeons replaced the diseased portion of the aorta and carefully deployed the stent graft into the descending segment.

AUBMC Director Joseph Otayek stated, “This surgery not only represents a technical milestone but the culmination of years of investment in training, infrastructure, and teamwork.” He added, “It reaffirms our commitment to pioneering medical excellence and delivering advanced, life-saving treatments to patients in Lebanon and the region.”

This milestone reaffirms AUBMC’s position as a pioneer in healthcare, reflecting its dedication to raising the standards of medical care in Lebanon and the wider region. By continually procuring advanced technologies and promoting multidisciplinary expertise, AUBMC remains committed to shaping the future of healthcare and ensuring that patients have access to world-class treatment.

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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 only medical institution in the Middle East to have earned the five international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, CAP, ACGME-I and JACIE attesting to its superior standards in patient-centered care, nursing, pathology/laboratory services and graduate medical education.

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 healthcare needs of over 360,000 patient visits annually.

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