

# AUBMCares Chronicles



## EDITORIAL

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It has now been four years since the establishment of AUBMCares in May of 2017 during the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Faculty of Medicine. It was envisioned as a new initiative by the Office of the Dean aimed at providing an administrative structure to organize, channel, and vet volunteer activities in response to the mounting need for humanitarian health services in Lebanon and the numerous spontaneous volunteer activities by AUB medical students (impact of the new curriculum). This issue of the Chronicles demonstrates vividly the exuberant success of this initiative and the amazing growth and diversification it has achieved under student leadership and organization during its first four years.

What is truly special and different today, however, is the heart-warming response of our students to the profound crises which have gripped Lebanon and the globe over the past year and a half, and which continue to this day.

This is evidenced by the **more than 300% increase in the number of volunteering hours of our students compared to one year ago**. To those who still doubt the superb humanistic qualities and sincere social engagement of our students, please peruse the pages of this publication to learn firsthand how these hours were spent, and the noble causes they have served.

When one gives of one's time to others without any expectation of reward, one is truly loving that other. Only by giving your time, your life, to serve the less fortunate freely, do you truly experience the joy of loving, and of knowing the true meaning of life as a healer.

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# GOLD HUMANISM HONOR SOCIETY

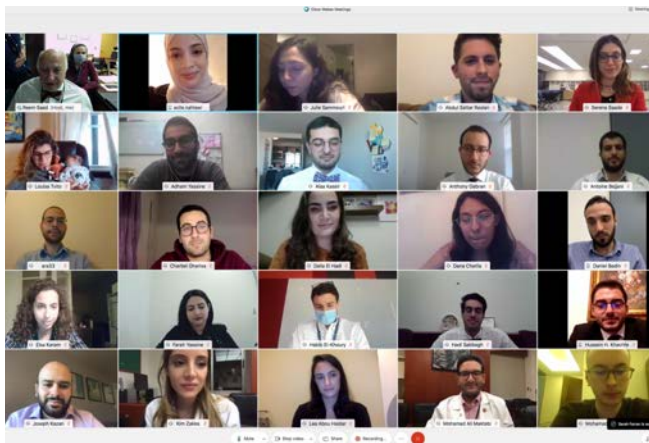
By Tamara Kadi and Sarah Wehbe

As Sir William Osler, one of the founding fathers of Johns Hopkins hospital, once said "The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient who has the disease."

This saying illustrates the longstanding idea that a physician's profession is not only limited to curing patients' diseases, but also entails attending to patients' needs by aiming to understand them and heal them on a personal level, and by providing them with the greatest possible care and compassion.

Physicians should be advocates for the wellbeing of their patients and should aim to maintain healthcare as humane as possible. These beliefs are at the basis of the Gold Humanism Honor Society (GHHS), which was established in 2001-2002 by the late Dr. Arnold Gold and his wife Mrs. Sandra Gold. The mission of GHHS is to recognize healthcare providers who are exceptional in the humanistic care they offer their patients and who embody qualities that make them exemplar role models and mentors to their peers. Members inducted to GHHS have the duty to constantly advocate for professional and compassionate healthcare and should aim to exemplify humanism and empathy through their medical careers.

In May 2019, the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine and Medical Center has become one of the very few GHHS chapters outside the US and the first in the Arab Region.



As Dr. Kamal Badr, Associate Dean for Medical Education and Gold Humanism Honor Society AUBFM Chapter advisor recalls "It is important to recognize and develop the other aspect of being a physician, which is the capacity to heal people on a personal level. Understanding a patient's personal story is just as important as treating them. This is what makes a physician successful." Dr. Badr believes that AUB students and healthcare providers are ambitious and always thriving for better opportunities, and that it is in big part thanks to their efforts as well as the many valuable initiatives at AUBMC that AUBFM was able to be recognized as an international chapter for GHHS. GHHS AUBFM Chapter elects its members by a nomination process on a yearly basis, from the ranks of medical students, residents, and faculty.

It is through difficult times like the ones we are living today that we must remember why we chose medicine in the first place. With the pandemic and the harsh circumstances that we are facing, the principles of humanism, professionalism and advocacy for patients must not be forgotten. It is in exceptional times like these that we must remember that patient-centered medical care is what matters the most.



# HEAL: A GROWING INITIATIVE

## HEAL HELEM

*By Maria Fatte and Ghassan Bou Saba*

HEAL's main mission has always been to support vulnerable and underserved communities in Lebanon by providing safe and accessible healthcare. As of October 2020, HEAL has been partnering up with Helem, an NGO that works towards ensuring justice and equality for the LGBTIQ+ community in Lebanon, in order to host free clinics. Members of this community often face harsh disparities, and struggle to find a safe space to receive appropriate primary healthcare that caters to their needs and that is free of discrimination. Before launching this new collaboration, HEAL's administrative members and volunteers underwent a training workshop offered by Helem to ensure a comfortable working environment. The goal was to promote inclusive healthcare practices through affirming communication skills and knowledge about their general and sexual health concerns.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of patients seen in every clinic was limited, yet we still managed to provide services to around 30 patients to date. We are hoping that once the situation improves, and with the work of our amazing volunteers, we will be able to help out more patients.

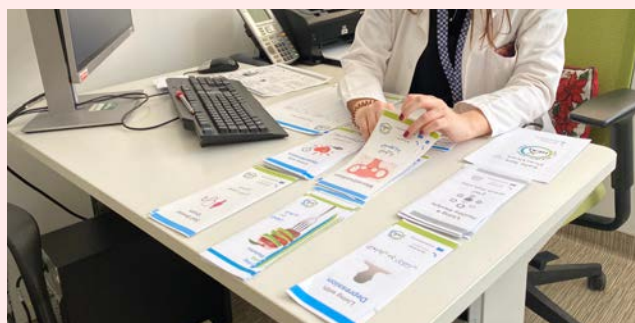
## HEAL DAWRATI

*By Sahar Assi*

For the past three years, HEAL has been doing its best to support the migrant worker community in Lebanon by providing them with access to free healthcare services. Over the past several months, the community has suffered greatly from the economic crisis. Many found themselves unemployed and unable to afford their daily needs, including hygienic products.

Throughout December, HEAL collaborated with Dawrati, a non-politically affiliated NGO that aims to end period poverty by providing women and girls across Lebanon with menstrual products. We collected women pads, panty liners and wipes from the AUBMC community and fortunately received over 200 items which were donated to the Anti-Racism Movement in Lebanon, the NGO we have been working with throughout the growth of HEAL.

We were very happy to know that donation boxes were distributed and will help sustain more than 100 women for a few months. Although it is only a small burden we helped relieve, we will always try to lend a hand to this community, in whichever way we can.



## HEAL HEALTH EDUCATION

*By Alice Recho and Daniel Badin*

HEAL health education stemmed from the belief that educating and empowering patients is just as important as diagnosing and treating them. With the pandemic preventing us from seeing patients, we expanded our work online by creating and posting educational brochures and videos. We covered a variety of topics including a series of well-needed mental health topics made in collaboration with the AUBMC psychiatry department.

Besides that, we focused on resuming our training of volunteers which we had begun before the pandemic. We organized an online workshop delivered by Helem on "sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics" and filmed a training video with the valuable help of Dr. Beatrice Khater to provide proper awareness on working with the LGBTIQ+ community for our volunteers before they attend HEAL Helem clinics.

It is a pleasure and a privilege that the HEAL Health Education room serves to give patients a safe and free space to communicate their thoughts and concerns and to gain knowledge to better understand and aid their health. We are excited to continue meeting patients on Saturdays. Stay tuned!





# HEALING WITH MUSIC BEYOND ALL BARRIERS

By Rasha Kakati

Amidst the difficulties we have all been facing in our country and the field of medicine, something brings us together. Music halts all worries, problems, and turmoil; through joining together and bringing words and emotions that cannot be delivered otherwise, we find comfort and peace.

Over the years, several medical students have cultivated their passion for music into the field of healthcare in their own ways. Soon enough, they joined forces to form “AMP: the Attending Musicians Project” in 2019. Founded by Joe Kazan, MD, a graduate of the class of 2020, AMP brings a twist to music in medicine and involves patients in musical sessions, under the mentorship and guidance of Dr. Kamal Badr, Associate Dean of Medical Education. Despite the global pandemic and visitor restrictions, AMP defied all limitations to bring happiness and joy to our patients.

This Christmas, our very special Santa Claus, Rami Saade, a Med II student, drew smiles and healed the souls and minds of many patients, along with Rasha Kakati, a Med IV student and president of AMP, Bakhos Tadros, a Med IV student, and Hani Faysal, a Med III student and vice president of AMP, who played various songs on their guitars and sang along with patients.

Laughs, smiles, and tears filled the hallways of the pediatrics inpatient unit and the Children's Cancer Center outpatient unit. An incomparable experience, it was apparent firsthand how essential and impactful music can be, when one patient felt his pain ease after singing along with us, and when a few minutes earlier, he was in dire need of pain relief.

To further propagate this impactful effect, the AMP team is currently planning a virtual concert in fragments, with details to be announced soon, as a tribute to all healthcare workers during these difficult times. Multiple talents from medical students, residents, and attendings will be compiled on a single platform, in hopes to lift spirits. AMP hopes to perpetuate its activities during its journey of bridging music and medicine.



# BESIDE PATIENTS... YET AFAR!

By the TIES Team

TIES is a volunteering program that is part of the AUBMC Patient Affairs Office and that was launched in 2017. It aims to connect with patients and their families, to support them throughout their hospital stay and to shift their attention away from their sickness. For most people, music and singing are purely means of entertainment, at TIES however, we believe that they are much more than that. We believe that playing and listening to music helps patients connect with their emotions and feel inspired.

During the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, TIES refused to let patients down and took it upon itself to find any possible way to bring music to them. With the collaboration of a wonderful group of musicians, TIES was able to stay close to AUBMC patients by bringing music to their rooms through online live performances that were featured on AUBMC platforms as well as on a local Lebanese TV channel. Patients in both the Naef K. Basile Cancer Institute and the COVID-19 unit truly enjoyed the shows and were promised more performances during those difficult times.

Moreover, TIES was honored to take part in the annual Christmas tree lighting in collaboration with Rachel and Elissar band. During the celebrations, a magical performance was delivered in addition to a series of musical rounds by violinist Ohanes Ashekian and the Attending Musician Program at the 8-North and the Pediatric units of AUBMC. Through these performances, TIES aimed to support and empower AUBMC patients despite these challenging times.

After all, sharing joy, harmonies and love can really making a difference for ourselves and for others.





# GOLD: HOPEFUL IN TIMES OF CRISIS

By Souha Farhat

Medications Team Supervisor

GOLD is a student-led initiative founded in January 2019 at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine under the umbrella of AUBMCares targeting the elderly population in Lebanon. Its mission is to provide the elderly population in Lebanon with medical and social support. Our motto is “Never Grow Old Alone” and at GOLD, we aim to improve the health and wellbeing of our seniors, especially the underserved and vulnerable among them.

Through fruitful collaborations with the family medicine, psychiatry and internal medicine departments at AUBMC, and despite the difficulties we faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, the GOLD team is proud to have been able to successfully provide free-of-charge healthcare services to around 50 patients over the age of 60. Our Golden patients continue to benefit from regular clinic visits to diagnostics (imaging, labs, procedures) and medications (acute and chronic in nature). GOLD also recognizes the services provided by the Ministry of Health in Lebanon in terms of the acquisition of chronic medications for free. All incoming golden patients that are eligible to benefit from free chronic medications register in the Ministry of Health registry through the assistance of our volunteers.

The lockdown restrictions issued by the government undoubtedly constituted a challenge that we had to carefully mitigate given that our patients constitute the population most at risk of developing severe adverse reactions if they ever contract the virus.

As such, and for the safety of our patients, we reached a compromise and decreased the frequency of their visits to the clinics as much as possible, while continuing to provide them with their needed monthly medications.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, the fundraising committee at GOLD organized fundraiser events in order to sustain clinics and help cover expenses for the underprivileged elderly patients. These involved selling over 300 stylish ID holders with creative and unique designs to the public and specifically to first year medical students, in addition to selling cloth and surgical face mask layered according to WHO recommendations. These items held the GOLD AUB logo and therefore contributed to the widespread further recognition of GOLD within the hospital community and beyond it.

I would like to take this unique opportunity to express my gratitude to my golden team for offering me the incredible opportunity to be part of such an amazing initiative that allowed me to serve my community for the past two years. Lama, human resources manager, Mohamad, administrative team supervisor, Wadih, appointments team supervisor, Sophie, patient records team supervisor, Saleem, diagnostics team supervisor, Wissam, fundraising team supervisor, Reem, social media supervisor, Alexia, financial advisor, and Acile, the mastermind behind GOLD, it is with your hard work and desire to give that all of this was made possible.



# COMING SOON: SAVE ME A SEAT

By Sarah Wehbe

Save Me A Seat is a new AUBMCares student-led initiative that will be launched soon at the American University of Beirut Medical Center. It aims to secure first generation car seats to newborns of disadvantaged families and to raise road safety awareness. In Lebanon and especially amidst the current economic crisis and the rapidly increasing inflation, securing car seats has nowadays become a luxury instead of the norm, with numerous families unable to provide them for their children.

Road safety awareness is essential, especially in a context of poor organization and infrastructure. Although there exists numerous organizations and initiatives addressing this topic in Lebanon, road safety is still an alarming issue that has yet to become more recognized and acknowledged by drivers. It is therefore important to emphasize this culture and to encourage the use of car seats.

The aim of Save Me A Seat is to collect new car seats as well as used ones that are still functional and in good condition from donors and families that are no longer using them as their children have grown older and as first-generation car seats can only be practical for up to two years of age. These car seats will be donated to families in need upon their discharge from AUBMC nursery or NICU. Donors will be contacted through a campaign launched on AUBMCares social media platforms in the hope of reaching the biggest possible audience.

We believe road safety is a necessity and a right for all. By providing car seats to disadvantaged families, we hope to get one step closer to limiting road traffic injuries and to ensuring long term protection for newborns.



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