

## **AUBMC Launches iFight PID Fund**

### **A Volunteer Initiative that Benefits Children Diagnosed with Primary Immunodeficiency Diseases**

**(April 3, 2017) Beirut, Lebanon** – The Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health, organized a press conference to launch the iFight PID Fund, a volunteer initiative that benefits children diagnosed with primary immunodeficiency diseases (PID).

Held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at Professor Jaber I. Sawaya Lecture Hall, AUB, in collaboration with the Center of Infectious Diseases Research, the iFight PID's Fund mission is that "Every child with PID should have the chance to live".

The event was attended by Dr. Joseph El Helou Director of Medical Care at the Ministry of Health representing H.E Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, Mrs. Ola Masri Joumblatt, Founder of the iFight PID Fund at AUBMC, Dr. Hassan El Solh, Medical Center Director and Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Miguel Abboud, Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, and Dr. Ghassan Dbaibo, Director of the Center for Infectious Diseases Research, members of the iFight PID at AUBMC Volunteer Group, and senior AUB and AUBMC faculty and staff.

Around 60 to 65 children are born in Lebanon every year with severe cases of PIDs, which makes the disorder almost as common as the annual number of new cases of cancer diagnosed in the country. Many of these children die before they even get to be appropriately diagnosed and treated.

With the financial support the iFight PID fund will provide, underprivileged children will have an equal opportunity to be cured from PID. In addition to the financial support, the fund aims at raising awareness among medical institutions, physicians, and parents as well as supporting advanced research related to the disorder.

In her opening speech, Mrs. Joumblatt said, "It is our mission to raise awareness about early screening and treatment for PID. Overcoming any hindrances, including lack of financial resources, especially when bone marrow transplant is a necessity, is a major aim for iFight PID fund."

Dr. El Solh said, "We believe that raising awareness among the Lebanese community and providing patients with the most appropriate and advanced care had it been through research or financial support is amongst our priorities as a medical center. We hope that through the iFight PID

Fund, we can reduce the number of incidences of patients who report with PID and cannot receive appropriate care for financial reasons.”

Dr. Dbaibo commented, “Cooperating between several parties is key to providing a better opportunity for the most vulnerable. There is an urgent need to spread awareness about the disease among doctors and civil society so that no child is left behind because of lack of financial resources.”

Primary immunodeficiency disorders are a group of more than 250 diseases, which affect the body leaving it more susceptible to germs that cause infections. In some cases, it causes an autoimmune disorder or even leads to cancer. Most primary immunodeficiency disorders are inherited and their rates are more prevalent in populations where intermarriage is common.

Dr. Al Helo concluded, “Our presence here today is a further attestation to supporting the future vision of establishing a comprehensive specialized center for PID in addition to supporting advanced research in the field to better serve our community.”

**End**

### **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 four international accreditations of JCI, Magnet, CAP, and ACGME-I 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 health care needs of over 360,000 patient visits annually.

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