

For Immediate Release



Beirut: 3-10-2017

AUB Faculty of Agriculture and Food Sciences Researchers **Develop a Research Agenda in the Field of Nutrition in Non-** **Communicable Diseases**

The American University of Beirut (AUB) ranked third in terms of research productivity (number of research papers) in the area of nutrition and non-communicable diseases, after King Saud and King Abdulaziz universities. Among these universities, AUB ranked first in terms of quality of research (as assessed by impact factor of published papers and the number of citations).

This ranking was featured in a recent scoping review that a group of researchers from NFSC (Dr. Nahla Hwalla, Dr. Farah Naja, Dr. Hibeh Shatila, Dr. Sally Haber and Dr. Lara Nasreddine) have conducted; whereby all research papers published in the field of nutrition and NCD in the 22 Arab Countries were reviewed.

This study is considered an important milestone as it is the first time AUB researchers, not only map existing research, but also lay out the process and framework that Arab countries should follow to develop a nutrition research in relation to NCD. Up until recently, the research in this field was not guided by any framework or informed agenda, therefore significantly limiting its impact on population health. This process is based on each country's culture, available resources and population, and can be applied to the 22 Arab countries.

Furthermore, the study highlighted significant gaps in nutrition and NCD research among the 22 Arab countries and have identified few opportunities. The main gaps identified were related to the predominance of laboratory-based studies with few cohort and intervention studies, and the small percentage of papers examining dietary patterns. While food frequency questionnaires (FFQs) were the main dietary assessment method used, only 35% were validated. Very few

studies included children and the majority considered nutrition in isolation, excluding other environmental factors.

Opportunities identified included the promising momentum in studying nutrition and NCDs among Arab countries (evidenced by an increasing number of papers published over the years) that may be the guide that will fill the identified gaps in future nutrition-related research. In addition, the higher number of papers in high-income countries coupled with the impact of papers in middle-income countries suggests an opportunity of synergistic collaboration among these countries.

The proposed process for the development of an informed research agenda and the identified gaps and opportunities presented in AUB study provides an essential guide for policy makers and other stakeholders (including members of the research community, funding agencies, NGOs, and the private sector) to conduct relevant research for the development of culture specific and evidence based intervention strategies that aim to curb the escalating prevalence of NCDs in these countries.

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For more information please contact:

Simon Kachar
Director of News and Media Relations
Mobile: 03427024 Office: 01374374 Ext: 2676
Email: sk158@aub.edu.lb

Note to Editors

About AUB

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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