



The Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program hosts the book launch of its Founding Director Dr. Thalia Arawi under the title “Towards A Post-Flexnerian Revolution: Graduating the Virtuous Physician”

The Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program (SHBPP) at the American University of Beirut (AUB) hosted the book launch of its founding director Dr. Thalia Arawi under the title “Towards A Post-Flexnerian Revolution: Graduating the Virtuous Physician” on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 in the Issam Fares Hall at the American University of Beirut in attendance of His Excellency the Minister of Public Health Dr. Firass Abiad, medical professionals, physicians, educators, residents, and students.

The book, which presents a “much-needed reminder that the medical profession is intrinsically a moral venture, calls on the broader medical community to recognize and remedy flaws in the moral education of its medical school graduates”. Using case studies from the US and Lebanon, Dr. Arawi “proposes a way forward to shape the medical education curriculum in order to better ensure that medical schools are graduating virtuous physicians whose interpersonal and ethical skills are as strong as their other medical skills”.

To mark the occasion of the book launch, a number of distinguished guest speakers, who have had notable contributions to the teaching and practice of ethics and humanism in medicine locally and internationally, were invited to share their thoughts and reflections on the book’s message.

In his opening words, Dr. Ramzi Sabra, the assistant dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and director of the Program for Research and Innovation in Medical Education at the AUB Faculty of Medicine noted that, “The book we launch today is not merely a set of hypothetical musings on an interesting and relevant topic. Rather, those who are familiar with Dr. Arawi’s work will recognize that many of the ideas expounded in the book have actually been implemented through the varied activities sponsored and initiated by the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program at AUB.”

Dr. Firass Abiad, who is also a long-time valued collaborator with the program, shared that his experience as director general of the Rafic El-Hariri University Hospital, and more recently his work at the Ministry of Public Health have highlighted the need for “virtuous people” in the healthcare sector. According to Dr. Abiad, the most critical component of reform and development is the presence of committed ethical professionals who can be entrusted to “do the right thing even when no one is looking”. Dr. Abiad added that accordingly, initiatives in health and medical education such as those presented in the book, which foster an environment where ethical behaviors and practices are role modelled and rewarded, are imperative in building for a better health care system in the future.



The event also featured messages from valued international experts in ethics, Dr. Vardit Ravitsky, president of the International Association of Bioethics (IAB), Dr. Arthur Caplan, professor and founding head of the Division of Medical Ethics at the New York University Grossman School of Medicine, and Dr. Ghassan Abu Sittah, director of the Conflict Medicine Program in the Global Health Institute at AUB. The speakers congratulated Dr. Arawi for this special achievement and praised her pioneering efforts and innovative approaches to integrate ethics and humanism education into medical curricula and training medical professionals in clinical ethics approaches both in Lebanon and the region. Medical student, Mr. Bashar Hassan also expressed his appreciation to the mentorship and collaborating opportunities with Dr. Arawi, during which he gained an enriching experience in disseminating ethics and humanism with fellow students and the public community.

Finally, Dr. Thalia Arawi shared a short personal narrative of her academic, personal, and professional journey at AUB, thanking family, friends, mentors, and colleagues who supported and contributed in various ways to the publication of this book. Dr. Arawi asserted that despite the hardships and moral distress physicians may face in their profession, it is the choices they make armed with moral courage, honesty, transparency, and trust that mark the makings of a “virtuous physician. She highlighted an optimistic message, “Towards a Post- Flexnerian Revolution: Graduating the Virtuous Physician” can be read at many levels. While it is addressed to physicians, it can also be read through different lenses. A virtuous person does the right thing even when no one is looking. In a world where the good perish and the evil flourish I continue to be an incorrigible optimist and believe that it will eventually be otherwise.” Dr. Arawi concluded with a reminder that, “It is that consciousness of our ephemerality that teaches us how to touch immortality and that is by leaving a good imprint, helping raise generations of virtuous people who will not only heal their patients, but also their homeland. Many of us continue believe in what is right and in AUB so that they may have life and have it more abundantly”.

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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 900 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 9,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 140 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 365-bed hospital.

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