

For Immediate Release



AUB disseminates results of 10 years of research on maternal and newborn health in region

Beirut, Lebanon- 27/05/2011 - Arab women are not encouraged to discuss issues related to their delivery care and few women's groups address maternal health issues, said participants at a regional conference on maternal and newborn health held at the American University of Beirut. Moreover, hospitals in the region do not always conform to evidence-based procedures, and standards of care are often lacking. As a result there is a rapidly increasing rate of Cesarean section and some other procedures not warranted by research, such as routine IV infusion in labor (which indirectly restricts women's mobility), episiotomy and enema.

AUB's Choices and Challenges in Changing Childbirth Research Network (CCCC) held a two-day conference in which 10 years of research on maternal and newborn health in Lebanon and the region was disseminated to the public. The conference took place on May 17 and 18 at the Riviera Hotel and included local, regional and international participants.

Housed in the Center for Research on Population and Health in AUB's Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), the aims of the CCCC network are to create scientific evidence on childbirth practices in the region and to understand how maternity care can be made safer and more satisfactory. The specific objectives of the network are producing and publishing high-quality research, disseminating research findings through media and various activities with stakeholders, and encouraging evidence-based practice by health care providers.

Professor Jocelyn DeJong, CCCC Regional Coordinator, gave a historical overview of the network. She said that it started as "Be-Well" group of researchers addressing maternal health in Lebanon. It was subsequently joined by researchers in Egypt interested to document and improve 'normal childbirth' (or pregnancies that are not high-risk). The network later expanded to include interested researchers in Syria and the occupied Palestinian territories. The network's research has resulted in over 40 peer reviewed publications collectively. DeJong summarized the contribution of the CCCC in having documented the lack of full adherence to evidence-based practices for normal birth in hospitals and problems in the quality of care.

Ms. Laura Wick from Birzeit University's Institute of Community and Public Health and coordinator of the Palestinian team summarized research by the network on women's perspectives of childbirth. She noted that women are not empowered to discuss issues related to their obstetric care and that few women's groups address maternal health issues.

Dr. Hyam Bashour of Damascus University and coordinator of the Syrian team reported on research by the network that has tested whether certain types of interventions can improve quality of health care.

Professor Tamar Kabakian, of FHS and coordinator of the Lebanese team, talked about the network's research on post-partum care which has documented the underutilization and deficiencies in the type of postpartum services provided. She also spoke about an initiative in Lebanon to produce the "*Salamat Hamlik*" (Safe Pregnancy) newsletter to provide much needed information on pregnancy, delivery and postpartum issues to women. Dr. Faysal El Kak of FHS and President of the Lebanese Society for Obstetrics and Gynecology spoke of the critical role of professional organizations in the improvement of maternal health care.

Dr. Metin Gulmezoglu of the World Health Organization in Geneva, described some international efforts to improve the quality of maternal health care. Professor Oona Campbell, Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, talked about causes of maternal death and the need to improve quality of care, a focus of the network's research. She noted that internationally there is a need for more robust tracking of progress, accountability, and greater political commitment to improve the health of mothers and newborns.

In the final panel on regional perspectives on maternal health by countries not yet represented in the network, Professor Atf Gherissi, from the Tunis-El Manar University, gave an overview on the maternal health in North Africa (NA). Professor Hora Soltani, of Sheffield-Hallam University in the UK, described the maternal health situation in Iran and the need to expand women's choices and improve evidence-based care there.

Participants concluded the meeting with calls for more regional exchange in the field so that research findings can be shared and ultimately have an impact on improving women's and newborns' health.

ENDS

For more information please contact:

Maha Al-Azar, Media Relations Officer, ma110@aub.edu.lb, 01-353 228

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 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of more than 7,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the 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.

Stay up to date on AUB news and events. Follow us on:

Website: www.aub.edu.lb

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/aub.edu.lb>

Twitter: http://twitter.com/AUB_Lebanon