

AUBM *Cares* Chronicles



HUMANITARIAN OF THE SEASON



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The walls of AUBMC display the core values of the institution: Respect, Integrity, Accountability, Teamwork, Diversity and Stewardship. As a product of this institution, I have experienced all these values one way or the other. The first aid tent experience, however, elevated the meaning and experience I've had so far of these values to a whole new level. The initial and main driver that prompted me and other members of the team was accountability: we felt directly responsible for saving and maintaining the health of the demonstrators. In order for our efforts to be in harmony and for us to function at an optimal efficiency, the spirit of teamwork had to be the bedrock on which all our work was built. This was established ever so organically from the start and was managed through shared leadership while ensuring inclusivity for all members. This brings me to draw on the diversity of our team, in terms of socio-cultural, economic, and training backgrounds, and that was a point of strength that we drew on to maintain our presence on the ground.

Our integrity in maintaining our eye on the purpose of the first aid tent was the glue that kept our team from getting dissolved under the high pressures and the volatility of the circumstances under which we operated. We have had tremendous support from various donors and organizations, on the grounds of stewardship, channeling resources responsibly and transparently. Finally, despite the diversity of the team, we have learned to work harmoniously, learning from each other, and building on our strengths. This culminated in the development of an environment of mutual respect between each and every team member, realizing the importance of their role and presence in the team.



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748

VOLUNTEEROMETER
TOTAL HOURS

SPONTANEOUS VOLUNTEERING IN TIMES OF CRISIS

The initial protests broke out like wildfires.

A faint and dying spark, suddenly awoken by the pained cries of its people.

A roaring blaze, fueled by decades of suffering, igniting into a resounding call for change.

But with it came the chaos.

A choking cloud of uncertainty that seemed to grow thicker with each passing day, thick tendrils writhing and roiling - invading the air tauntingly.

The tent stood in the middle of the square, its white silhouette a stark contrast against the rather morose-looking backdrop of the stormy summer sky. A billowing sign hung loosely above its entrance, its bright red lettering almost glowing in the dying light. 'First Aid' it read in gleaming letters.

The inside of the tent was small and cramped: to the left lay a single table lined up against the wall, medical instruments and clean bandages strewn across most of its length. They rose in teetering towers, carefully stacked into ever shifting mounds. To the right was a makeshift bed, its once folded sheets now a sprawled and jumbled mound of cotton and linen. At the center of the room were the first responders, weary-eyed. Alert.

When the 'October revolution' first took Lebanon by storm, more than a handful of protestors gathered in downtown Beirut's Riad al-Solh Square, demanding for the government's resignation. The movement swelled over the next several days as thousands took to the streets, voicing their discontent amidst the looming threat of an economic crisis.

Joining them within a couple of hours were dozens of medical responders and physicians from various hospitals and institutions, organizing themselves into a first aid station to treat the medical emergencies that would inevitably arise. Following in their steps were medical students and nurses, directing protestors to the site, as the plaza grew busier. From burns and grazes, to mild panic attacks and bouts of respiratory distress, the team triaged cases as they arrived, administering care when necessary, and delegating the more severe conditions to neighboring hospitals. As news of their efforts spread, donations started flooding in, with supplies ranging from bandages and gauzes to automatic external defibrillators and medications.

By Cyril Zakka

"It really is an eye opening experience. I feel like we live in a bubble as physicians in the hospital. I witnessed so many individuals who were in dire need of care but couldn't afford it, or didn't have any identification papers to begin with. With all the knowledge we had, we couldn't do much to help them. I think the whole systems needs restructuring - we need to have more medical students and physicians on the ground caring for the needy."

- Dr. Zakia Dimassi



AMP THE LIGHTS OF THE HOLIDAYS

“De la musique avant toute chose”, Paul Verlaine.

Music has been glorified in many fields such as poetry and painting. Throughout the centuries, this art has proven its importance, which extends beyond its cultural implications. In addition, music and medicine have more in common than only their initials. Medical school teaches us how to become healers and how to leave our impact on every patient we come across. Similarly, music also touches patients’ souls. Therefore, music is indeed a healer.

Aiming to support patients in the most artistic and complete way, several medical students over the years have combined their passion for music with the field of healthcare. Thus, these students initiated “AMP: the Attending Musicians Project” in 2019, an initiative under AUBMCares. Founded by Joseph Kazan, a current fourth year medical student, AMP brings a twist to healthcare by involving patients in musical sessions. During AMP events, patients are provided with musical instruments and are invited to sing and play along to songs they have chosen. This initiative was certainly a beautiful success. Besides providing joy and comfort to patients, it has helped foster an environment of closeness and expression, therefore ensuring a therapeutic experience.

Moreover, this project has pleased physicians and medical students as well. Indeed, watching patients engage in activities, express their preferences in terms of genres, and sing along to their favored songs, brings ultimate happiness to all members of the AMP community.

The AMP family strongly believes that a smile is more contagious than an illness, thus they aim to spread those around the medical center by promoting a friendly environment. Consequently, sessions first began at the psychiatry unit, and shortly expanded to the hemodialysis unit as well different department across the hospital.

In order to celebrate the holidays, the team along with several volunteers visited the psychiatry inpatient unit, the hemodialysis unit, and the Children’s Cancer Center of Lebanon, to chant Christmas carols and engage their audience in a musical aura. Patients were delighted to have AMP present to them joyful tunes in the magic essence of the holiday and the Christmas spirit that the AMP team wished to share. Additionally, volunteers from AMP joined forces with the CCCL team in order to distribute donated gifts to children at the inpatient unit.

Children, their families, and the AMP community all appreciated the magical atmosphere. The experience was like no other. Appreciating such beautiful and innocent smiles on patients’ faces was indeed one of the greatest gifts this Christmas has provided to the AMP team. After all, “Happiness is found in even the darkest times but only to those who remember to turn on the lights” (J.K. Rowling) and this light is certainly turned on by music. Therefore, the AMP family hopes to perpetuate its activities and touch more patients during its journey of bridging music and medicine.

By Rasha Kakati & Rose-Marie Akiki



SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE: GOLD

GOLD is a new AUMCares student-led initiative at the American University of Beirut Faculty of Medicine (AUBFM). It is a humanitarian project, which principally targets the elderly population in Lebanon. GOLD's vision is to improve the health and wellbeing of our seniors, focusing primarily on the more vulnerable population amongst them. Our aim is to include residents of nursing homes and the elderly which have no proper access to healthcare.

GOLD's purpose can be achieved by combining both the medical and social qualities. On the social level, GOLD seeks to overcome status divisions by engaging the older adults in interactive experiences and enriching their influential roles. This is mainly done through our events, the first of which took place in early December 2019.

'Mini-Maxi' was successfully the first of its kind event in Lebanon. It served as an transgenerational learning event where older adults and toddlers spent time together and participated in group activities. The event was presented in collaboration with Dent De Lait children's daycare and Moakidiyeh seniors' center. We are thankful for the end result, which was beyond gratifying to the GOLD family, the toddlers, and our dear elderly community.



On the medical level, and after months of overcoming difficult challenges in order to make this vision a reality, the GOLD Clinic was fruitfully launched on January 17, 2020. It is a primary healthcare clinic that operates on a weekly basis and is free of charge. The clinic also serves as an opportunity for students and residents volunteers to develop their clinical experiences and serve their communities at the same time. It welcomes all the disadvantaged seniors, challenged by access to health services. GOLD clinic is fortunately functioning through the collaboration with AUBMC's family medicine and psychiatry departments. Additionally, patients are referred from local collaborating NGOs namely Ajjalouna and Beit El Baraka.

Furthermore, GOLD stresses on the importance of addressing mental health in older adults especially given the hardships arising during these times. For that purpose, the GOLD Clinic is offering psychiatric and psychological consults as well as interventions for its patients. Moreover, GOLD also aims to offer free diagnostic studies and medications. In line with that aim, we have organized a fundraiser bake sale on January 28, 2020, with numerous upcoming events, aiming at providing accessible healthcare in a sustainable manner.

By the Gold Team



RSO CHRISTMAS GATHERING

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Sir Winston Churchill.

In light of the current economic and political crisis, hundreds of families have incurred a heavy financial burden. Consequently, they have cut back on meals and fundamental necessities such as clothes, diapers, food, and medications. Therefore the Resident Student Organization, in the giving spirit of the Christmas season, held a clothing drive in the AUBMC premises.

Collecting boxes were set up (at the Chief's office), which allowed all members of the AUBMC community to donate clothing and blankets to those who needed it. In a matter of only three weeks, a large number of donations were collected.

Thus, a total of forty bags were distributed to numerous NGOs like Dafa, Leap4love, and Sanad_من مطرحك ساعد غيرك.

By Kimberley Zakka & Dr. Sarah Abi Doumeth



"Through the gesture of giving a sweater or a new pair of shoes or anything that was needed — they were so appreciative. It is indeed so rewarding to think that we were able to help even if it was in a small way"

- Sarah Abi Doumeth, RSO President



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