

Iraqi nurses and paramedics complete two-week training course at AUBMC

On Sunday March 16, 2008, a group of Iraqi paramedics and nurses completed a two-week Emergency Health Rehabilitation Program at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) after undergoing their last hands-on exercise in the training program: the "Emergency Response Drill" at AUB's Peripheral Arts Parking Area.

The Iraqi Ministry of Health chose AUBMC to train a total of 60 hospital-based nurses and paramedics -- from the four regions of Iraq -- working in emergency departments of government hospitals in emergency medical services and life support programs. The choice of the Iraqi Ministry of Health came following a proposal and implementation plan by AUB's Regional External Programs (REP).



A car explosion, one of the leading causes of casualties in Iraq, is mimicked during the drill

The American University of Beirut (AUB) Vice President for Regional External Programs Hassan Diab hoped that this training session would be "the beginning of similar collaborative efforts between AUB and various institutions in Iraq and the region." Commenting on the emergency drill, Diab said that "this intensive course went very well and as planned and today's drill is indicative of its success."

According to Iraq's Charge d'Affaires to Beirut Manhal Al Saleh, who was at the drill site on Sunday, "The Iraqi Ministry of Health made the right choice because AUBMC is the

most prestigious medical center in the region and the trainees are, therefore, bound to acquire the best professional and competent medical skills."

Jihad Abdul Ghafour, a 27 year old nurse working at the Kirkuk General Hospital and member of the Norwegian Trauma Care Foundation, thought that in light of the violence inflicting his homeland, "the training was beneficial in contextualizing my experience in the medical theories underlying it," said Abdul Ghafour. "I hope all paramedics and nurses in Iraq get the chance to complete this course," he added.



Iraqi paramedics learn how to treat casualties at the scene of an explosion

A Kurdistan woman specialist in medical assessment, who refrained from giving her name, said that the training was a "unique opportunity." She added that "all our teachers put a great deal of effort in training us, and we highly appreciate that."



Group photo after certificate distribution

Each of those who completed the course received an official certificate of completion from AUB's Continuing Education Center whose acting director, George Farag, played a key role in coordinating the smooth progress of the program. In addition to Farag, who is also assistant vice president for REP, the project team consisted of AUB doctors, nurses, staff, and administrators including Munthir Kuzayli, director of the Medical Center; Abdullah Rubeiz, assistant professor of Medicine and Cardiology; Afif Moufaraj, assistant professor Clinical Emergency Medicine; Amin Kazzi, chief and medical

director of the Emergency Department; Assad Muhyddin Taha, General Surgery Trauma Critical Care; Bassem Saab, professor of Family Medicine; Fadi Bitar, professor of Pediatrics; George Abi Saad, director of the Surgery Intensive Care Unit; Gladys Mouro, director of Nursing Services; and Marianne N. Majdalani, director of Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

Funded by the World Bank's International Development Association, the Emergency Health Rehabilitation Program fulfills REP's mission in consolidating "the academic and professional experience of the University's faculty and staff to provide rigorous consulting and technical assistance" in the region. It also comes in line with the Iraqi Ministry of Health's efforts to rehabilitate "deteriorated emergency medical services," as is described in the training program's website.

Covering theoretical and technical approaches to emergency medical services and life support, the training curricula included tutoring on basic trauma life support, advanced care trauma for nurse, training of trainers, and major incident medical management support. The next group of participants to partake in EHRP are expected to arrive in Beirut from Baghdad in mid April.