

PRESS RELEASE

The Bone and Joint Decade World Network Conference 2011

Equality in Global Health Care - Bridging the Gaps

Beirut, October 2011 – Held under the auspices of the Lebanese Ministry of Health, Lebanon was host to 'The Bone and Joint Decade World Network Conference 2011' which took place from October 14-16 at Le Royal Hotel. The Bone and Joint Decade (BJD), an organization dedicated to improving life for millions across the globe who are affected by musculoskeletal conditions, and endorsed by the WHO and more than 60 national governments, identified this year's theme as "Equality of Care throughout the World – Closing the Gaps". The summit meeting which brought together H.E. Mr. Ali Hassan Khalil, Lebanese Minister of Health, Dr. Charaf Abou Charaf, President of the Order of Physicians, Prof. Tony Woolf, Chairperson of the BJD, Prof. Ghassan Maalouf, Medical Director of Bellevue Medical Center and Member of the Board of the BJD, Prof. Yasser Yaghi, Conference President and Mrs. Randa Berri, Middle-East BJD Ambassador, in addition to a number of local and international medical officials, considered the gaps in the provision and quality of care for musculoskeletal conditions; identified the barriers to accessibility and proposed ways in which the BJD and supporting organizations can work together to close them.

Mr. Ali Hassan Khalil, Minister of Health in Lebanon, inaugurated the conference and said, "It brings me great pleasure to be here and support such a prestigious and dedicated summit which strives to create a world where prevention, treatment and care of people with musculoskeletal disorders are of high standards. We hope that this congress which for the first time brings together people from different backgrounds to work together on the topic of musculoskeletal disease will help us better address this as a public issue." He also tasked the BJD to produce recommendations to help reduce the impact of musculoskeletal conditions in Lebanon.

Also commenting on the occasion, Prof. Tony Woolf, from BJD, said, "The goal of the Bone and Joint Decade is to improve the quality of life for people with musculoskeletal health disorders that are notorious and common causes of severe, long-term pain and physical disability. Our aim is to raise awareness and promote action to combat suffering and the cost to society associated with musculoskeletal disorders." He continues, "It is of particular importance for us to consider and agree on how to work together nationally, regionally and globally to advance the priority for musculoskeletal health and science in the Middle East."

The world-class summit featured an outstanding agenda with more than 15 key world opinion leaders as well as representatives from BJD National Action Networks, including experts from orthopedics, rheumatology, rehabilitation, public health, patient organizations, societies and syndicates, journal editors and other relevant backgrounds. Issues raised covered topical subjects such as problems resulting from road traffic accidents, the impact of aging populations on our societies, the role of vitamin D & stem cells in bones and fractures, as well as the importance of public involvement and team work among the government and different parties in raising awareness, addressing the right issues, and working efficiently to improve the life of our societies. The conference included presentations, workshops, social events, dinners and also created and strengthened networks, providing a unique opportunity for people from different global regions to meet together.

The Bone and Joint Decade World Network Conference 2011 also held a session that focused entirely on Patient Advocacy and provided a forum for patient groups and patient representatives from around the world, in particular the local region, to meet and further enhance their agenda. This formed a great opportunity facilitating the development of future patient organizations.

In addition the need to develop priority for musculoskeletal conditions in the Middle East was the focus of a summit session. This resulted in the creation of the first Bone and Joint Decade Regional Forum bringing together professional and patient organisations from across the Middle East.

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