



THE 2019 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LEBANESE PULMONARY SOCIETY  
May 02 – 04, 2019 - Phoenicia Hotel, Beirut - Lebanon

## **The Increasingly Local Evidence of the Association Between Air Pollution and our Deteriorating Health**

Panel Discussion (12:55 – 13:45)

Moderator:

Najat Aoun Saliba, PhD

Participants:

Mazen Malkawi, Eng

Hyam Mallat, PhD

Issam Lakkis, PhD

Tharwat Mokalled, PhD

Zeina Aoun Bacha, MD

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The 2019 annual meeting of the Lebanese pulmonary society-Lebanese order of physicians which took place on May 2-3-4 in Phoenicia Hotel, Beirut, where lecturers discussed topics related to pulmonary and respiratory diseases and latest advancements in the field. A panel discussion within the scientific program of the meeting, moderated by Dr. Najat Aoun Saliba (professor at the Chemistry department at the American University of Beirut), brought together researchers, specialists and physicians and discussed air pollution and its effect on health.

Dr. Mazen Malkawi (Centre for Environmental Health Action, World Health Organization - Jordan office) reported that around 98% of the people in our region (Middle East and North Africa) breathe air that is not compliant with the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. He linked air pollution to 45% of the acute respiratory infections, 19% of lung cancer, 28% of ischemic heart diseases, 35% of stroke occurrence and 34% of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Dr. Issam Lakkis (professor at the mechanical engineering department at the American University of Beirut) confirmed the alarming situation in Lebanon with regards to air quality highlighting the excessively high number of diesel generators in the capital (more than 8,000) and their contribution to air pollution.

Dr. Hyam Mallat (lawyer and professor of environmental law) drew the attention to the number of air pollution-related deaths that reaches yearly 800,000 in Europe and 9 million worldwide. He explained that in 2002, a law was issued in Lebanon to maintain air safety and prevent air pollution. However, the application decree was never issued.

Dr. Tharwat Mokalled (air quality specialist, supervising the national network for air quality monitoring – the ministry of environment [MOE]) explained that the MOE had installed an air monitoring network across Lebanon from 2013 to 2017, and that citizens can access the pollution data via a mobile application (Sensio Air) or national reports issued monthly and yearly by the MOE. She added that the MOE is taking action in raising awareness by offering presentations and workshops in schools, universities, municipalities...

Finally, Dr. Zeina Aoun Bacha (Pulmonary diseases specialist at Hotel Dieu de France hospital and vice-president of the Lebanese pulmonary society) concluded by saying that air pollution is the second cause of death by non-

communicable diseases, cigarette smoking being the first, and urged involved parties to take serious actions since the deterioration of our health is evident. The meeting was concluded with a general agreement for the necessity to raise awareness, enforce environmental laws, and collaborate with environmental organizations to save the air we breathe.

***Dr. Zeina Aoun Bacha***

President, Lebanese Pulmonary Society