

Your Excellency Deputy Minister of Health Dr. Asa'ad Ramlawi

Brother Peter Bray , Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University

Dr. Irene Hazou, Academic Vice President at Bethlehem University

Dr. Aimee Sha'alan the CEO of MAP (Medical Aid for Palestinians)

Professors Teresa Wiseman and Julia Downing

Dear Colleagues

Dear International and national guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I welcome you all and it's our great honor to host you at our first conference of its kind which will shedding the light on the importance of scientific research. This is much of concern to Bethlehem University for the sake of improving the quality of services delivered to cancer patients and encouraging nurses to carry out research in the field of oncology and palliative care and to establish strong ties among them. The conference also aims at having participants establish a network among them to share their experience and ideas in this field.

I hereby second Professor Wiseman when she once said:

"Research is accessible and translated to practice to improve the outcomes and experience for cancer patients and their families. Make a difference to patient care. "

***Dear guests:***

The growing incidence rate of cancer cases in Palestine that reached 83.9 per (One hundred thousand) persons in Palestine, according to the statistics of the MOH, constitutes a great challenge to both the public and private sectors . According to the said statistics, the cancer-related mortality rate has added up to 27.8 per (One hundred thousand )persons in Palestine which makes it the second leading cause of death after cardiovascular diseases.

Indeed, there is a shortage of qualified nursing staff to perform a quality of care to the cancer patients , which increases the suffering of patients and their families since a nurse gains knowledge from practice only.

Therefore, in the light of the responsibility for community service and human health, and in line with Bethlehem University's mission to build academic programs based on community needs, the University decided to establish the Higher Diploma Program of Oncology and Palliative Care in Palestine which was established on 2016. This will help raise awareness about the prevention of this disease, and will provide quality services based on strong knowledge and high skills to be delivered in a professional and civilized way to the patients in their difficult journey since the early diagnosis of the disease , or even at terminal stage where they can die in peace and dignity.

We have already graduated the first cohort in summer 2018 in order for us to have a distinctive footprint in patient's care in a scientific way . We are proud with what those graduates have achieved so far, where two of them have set up a palliative care unit at the AVH in Jerusalem.

In addition, and to continue improving the education for nurses, we are in the process of opening a Masters program in Oncology, hopefully it will start by Fall-2019 with the support of the Palestinian Ministry of Health.

In this regard, I would like to thank Dr. Asa'ad Ramlawi for his continuous help and support and also acknowledge MAP efforts in financing the higher diploma program and covering the tuition of students specially from the governmental institutions.

We hope this program sustain with the help and support of our generous donors because of its great benefit, especially as the ministry is about to establish the Khaled El Hassan Hospital with a capacity of 600 nurses.

Here I would like to place on record my appreciation and acknowledgment to a number of individuals and organizations:

***- To our friends from the United Kingdom, especially the municipality of Glasgow, who hosts nurses for the program every year to do training at hospitals in Glasgow , and the Mayer who was the first person who opened the program on 2016 and graduated the first cohort in June 2018.***

- To Mr. Jerry O'Hare for continuous support since the inception of this program.

- To Dr. Jacqueline from King University in London for constant and endless assistance.

- To Europe Oncology Nursing Society (EONS), whose high diploma curriculum has been adopted by the Oncology program. I would like to note that we have likewise established the Palestinian Oncology Nursing Society (PONS) as endeavor to integrate our work together. The PONS has members from both the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and we welcome individuals to join this association . However, the EONS has already granted scholarships for our member students to attend master classes and supported others to participate in their international conferences.

- To the Ministry of Health for giving the students an study day to enroll the higher diploma program. Here I would like to urge the MOH to give incentives to the high diploma graduates in order to encourage other students to join the program.

I also call upon governmental and non-governmental organizations to exert utmost and concerted efforts to improve the health services to the cancer patients, to avoid duplication of services, and to establish a palliative care unit.

**Here I would support what Prof. Julia Downing has said that: "Palliative care is a human right and we need to work together to develop the palliative care especially for children and adults."**

**I believe that each one of us can make a difference no matter where we work or what we do, but we can achieve great things when we work together**

We at the Faculty of Nursing are always ready to cooperate for the development and training of personnel and staff.

Also I would like to thank all hospital and organizations for their support to our students during their training ,AVH Al-Najah university hospital ,Beit-Jala Hospital ,Dunia center in Ramallah.

Last but not least, I would like to extend sincere thanks to the Scientific Committee members chaired by Dr Jaqualyn Moore.

I also would like to express gratitude to the conference organizing committee

I thank all those who contributed to the financing of this conference:

-Especially the Main Sponsors namely , MAP

-with thanks to the Green Brigade supporters of Celtic football Glasgow

-ECO for Medical Supplies

I thank you all, and wish you a successful and productive conference and that it achieves its objectives.

Great thanks go to Professor Jamil Khader, The Dean of Scientific Research, for his support to this conference and for being the MC of this conference.

Finally, I would like to thank Brother Peter Bray, the Bethlehem University Vice Chancellor, for his continuous support and for his long term vision of expanding the BU facilities and in particular the Faculty of nursing buildings and programs to better serve the local community.

Now the floor is his to give his address.