



LEBMASH

THE LEBANESE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2016**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lebmash has grown exponentially in 2016. As I step into the presidency of this organization I wanted to reflect on the successes that Lebmash has accomplished while looking forward to what is waiting for us in the near future.

During the past year, Lebmash reached more than 60,000 viewers worldwide with its "Shou el Sabab" video, to challenge the concept of "conversion therapy." Through this campaign, Lebmash expanded from educating health professionals about the harm of such so-called "therapy" to bringing medical knowledge to the general public in an accessible manner. Unfortunately, in this same year we witnessed public statements encouraging people to silence their attractions and telling parents that their children can become "ex-gay". Lebmash worked closely with other professional organizations, rethinking further opportunities to educate everyone, providers and the public alike, about the negative effects of these "therapies."

A topic that I will make sure remains a priority in our work is improving access and knowledge about transgender care. Lebmash is moving forward to better understand transgender health in Lebanon. We are in the process of translating, to Arabic, the guidelines of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) on the health of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals. The WPATH resource aims at emphasizing the medical approach around gender identity and transition-related services. Additionally, our renewed partnership with students from Johns Hopkins will focus on mapping of the needs of the transgender community in Lebanon and the health services that are offered to them. This needs assessment is one that will enlighten our future work in transgender care.

Talking about Lebmash's success would be incomplete without expressing appreciating for the team that works diligently to advance LGBT health and sexual health. Immediate past president Omar Fattal devotes his energy to Lebmash and to making sure the yearly

Lebmash fundraiser in New York is a big success. He has been fueling the sustainability of the organization for the past two years and his contributions as president serve as a model for me. Hasan Abdessamad is a true innovator who was behind founding Lebmash. He offers an expanding experience in transgender and lesbian health. Chady Ibrahim makes sure that health leaders in Lebanon, from the Ministry of Health to university professors consider sexual health and LGBT health as part of their work. His experience in working on mental health of the transgender community in Lebanon is unique. Hossam Mahmoud has a wealth of experience in public health and research. His insights and excellent language skills deliver our messages in the best way possible to the media. Additionally, in 2016, Angela Massouh joined our board adding to the diversity of our board from a health professional standpoint. Angela offers expertise in education of nursing and in cardiovascular disease.

Our Lebmash family extends beyond the board members. Our many volunteers bring forward enthusiasm and a student perspective to our work. Our growing list of partners includes experts on HIV, mental health and sexology, covering a broad range of health topics. Our staff members work meticulously, making sure that Lebmash's mission is served in a coordinated and efficient manner.

Thinking back to our achievements in 2016 and all the amazing people involved in making our goals a reality, I cannot help but feel even more energized and committed to Lebmash and to sexual and LGBT health in Lebanon.

Sincerely,

Omar Harfouch, MD MPH



ABOUT

LebMASH is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization, registered in Lebanon as of 2014, and governed by a board of directors that includes Lebanese health professionals based in Lebanon and the United States. LebMASH aims at advancing sexual and reproductive health for all individuals in Lebanon, with particular focus on the health of LGBT and other marginalized populations in Lebanon.

OUR MISSION

Advancing healthcare for LGBT individuals and sexual/reproductive health for all individuals in Lebanon.

OUR VISION AND LOGO

Our vision is summarized by the three yellow diamond-shaped dots in our logo: the first dot represents training, education, and research in the area of LGBT health and sexual health; which leads to the second dot that represents awareness and increased knowledge; and that - in turn - builds the third dot, which represents change.

OUR LEGAL STATUS

In April 2014, LebMASH became officially registered with the Lebanese government as not-for-profit, non-governmental organization, allowing LebMASH to operate in Lebanon in full compliance with Lebanese law.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Spreading awareness and knowledge, as well as influencing attitudes and behaviors of health care providers regarding LGBT health and sexual health in Lebanon.
- Spreading awareness and knowledge, as well as influencing attitudes and behaviors of the general public regarding LGBT health and sexual health in Lebanon.
- Influencing and changing policies and legislations in professional organizations including schools, hospitals and governmental agencies to protect the health rights and well-being of LGBT individuals and sexual health in Lebanon.
- Advancing research regarding LGBT health and sexual health in Lebanon.
- Supporting other organizations that provide healthcare for LGBT and sexual healthcare in Lebanon.

PARTNERSHIPS

LebMASH strongly believes in the importance of developing and maintaining strong partnerships and other collaborative agreements with other organizations and key players that share a similar point of view regarding human rights and sexual health. We believe that such partnerships create better opportunities for serving the community and lead to better outcomes.



ACTIVITIES

SHOU EL SABAB

LebMASH produced the short movie "Shu el Sabab?" (What is the cause?) to address misconceptions and increase awareness regarding homosexuality, its "cause", lack of efficacy of "conversion therapy," as well as the potential harmful effects of such "therapy." This movie was designed and animated by the talented Jessica Azar. It was made possible by a generous grant from the Swiss Embassy in Lebanon. This movie is based on the stories of gay and lesbian individuals living in Lebanon who participated in focus groups conducted by LebMASH. The movie has had over 11,000 views on YouTube and over 60,000 views on Facebook. It can be accessed through the following link:

https://youtu.be/O_WKO34EoVE



BREAK THE SILENCE

For the fifth year in a row, LebMASH has continued to offer its Break The Silence (BTS) Student Grant. Every year, students in the health field submit academic papers to enter the BTS competition. The winner receives a \$1,500 grant towards a trip to attend a medical conference on LGBT health. BTS was designed as an incentive for students in Lebanon to research and study sexual health and health of sexual minorities. The grant was initially funded by board members. In 2015, LebMASH launched a Zoomaal crowd sourcing campaign that was successful in raising enough funds to sustain BTS for three additional years.

The winner of the #BTS2016 competition was Sara Michli's paper titled "Exploring the risk and protective factors against internalized homonegativity in a sample of Lebanese individuals with same-sex desires".

We would like to thank the Health Champions Fadi Breiteh and Azzam Mehsen for their generous donation and support.

Deadline for application for #BTS2017 is May 17, 2017. Help us spread the word.

<https://lebmesh.org/break-the-silence-2017/>



ACTIVITIES

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

This project aims at developing a database of LGBT-friendly health care providers and, thus, to improve access of LGBT people to health care. The project started with interviewing stakeholders and LGBT individuals to assess their needs and experience with the health system. Based on the results of this first step, health care professionals will be interviewed and ranked according

to their knowledge and attitude towards LGBT individuals.

Project Manager:

Hady Naal, M.A candidate (Clinical Psychology)

To learn more:

<https://lebmash.org/lgbt-directory/>

LGBT MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

In collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and in agreement with the MOPH Mental Health Strategy 2015-2020, LebMASH is preparing an LGBT Mental Health training manual that will be reviewed by all stakeholders in the field and endorsed by MOPH. Later, ten training sessions on LGBT

Mental Health are planned be delivered to a total of 150 mental health professionals and will be based on the manual.

Project Manager:

Ghina Ghanem, MA in Clinical Psychology

LEBMASH ANNUAL RECEPTION

On March 24 2016, LebMASH hosted its Annual Reception and Award Gala in Ashkal-Alwan, Beirut, Lebanon. The reception was attended by representatives from, universities, professional societies, and civil society organizations.

Marsa Sexual Health Center received LebMASH's 2016 "Leader in LGBT Health Equality Award" for providing confidential and anonymous services related to sexual health and establishing themselves as a needed safe-space for LGBT individuals seeking healthcare services. Marsa's President Dr. Ayman Assi

and Manager, Diana Abou Abbas, accepted the award.

The Swiss Embassy was represented by its Deuxieme Secrétaire, Mr. Chasper Sarott. The Lebanese Psychological Association (LPA) was represented by its board member Dr. Michel Nawfal. The Lebanese Psychiatric Society (LPS) was represented by its president Dr. Josiane Madi Skaff who called for strengthening the collaboration between LPS and LebMASH and called for annulling article 534.

ACTIVITIES

LEBMASH, USJ, AND HÔTEL-DIEU TALK SEXUAL HEALTH

In collaboration with the Department of Psychiatry at Hôtel-Dieu de France Hospital and Saint Joseph University (USJ), Lebmash delivered a half-day educational activity addressing health of sexual minorities as part of the "matinées scientifiques" on March 26 2016. The topics covered dealing with LGBT individuals in a clinical setting, lesbian health, LGBT mental health and general social challenges faced by the LGBT community in Lebanon. This activity was organized by Dr. Sami Richa and the Hotel-Dieu scientific committee.



LEBMASH, AUB MEDICAL STUDENTS WORKSHOP

On March 26 2016, a workshop for medical students was held at AUB in collaboration with LeMSIC - SCORA. Participants were medical students from most schools in Lebanon. Lebmash Board members and John Hopkins MPH Intern Benjamin Miller delivered a newly-developed LGBT curriculum lectures to the participants. Workshop activities included sexual health interview exercises. The evaluation of the workshop showed a significant increase in students' confidence in their knowledge around LGBT health.

We would like to thank our volunteers Michel Tawil and Mohammad Haidous for their great help in the evaluation phase of the project.

We would also like to thank Rami Baz for fully funding this activity.





ACTIVITIES

STANDARDS OF CARE IN

TRANSGENDER HEALTH NOW IN ARABIC AND LEBANON-SPECIFIC

With the support of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), LebMASH translated to Arabic the WPATH Standards of Care (SOC) for transgender health. Launching of the document will take place in May 2017 around the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) both nationally in Lebanon and worldwide via the WPATH networks. The document will be available in English and Arabic on LebMASH and WPATH websites.

At the same time, LebMASH will be launching a country-specific Supplementary Document to the SOC detailing current practices in transgender health in Lebanon and assessing current insurance and pharmacy practices, hormone availability and pricing and access to care. Work on the Supplementary Document was made possible by collaborating with the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University who provided two interns mentored by LebMASH board members.

WPATH WORLD PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION for TRANSGENDER HEALTH

LEBMASH

معايير الرعاية

الخاصة بصحة الأفراد المتحولين / ات جنسياً وجندرياً
وغير الممثلين / ات جندرياً

الرابطة العالمية المختصة بصحة المتحولين / ات جندرياً



ACTIVITIES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

LebMASH aims at increasing the knowledge of the public on sexual health and LGBT Health. In line with this goal, LebMASH volunteers conducted extensive research to answer Frequently Asked Questions regarding homosexuality, transsexuality and LGBT health, in addition to the social and legal challenges faced by LGBT individuals in Lebanon and the Arab world. The first

section was posted on the LebMASH website early in 2016.

The second was ready by the end of the year and is now available on our website. Over 30 questions have been answered and both English and Arabic versions are available. To learn more, visit:

www.lebmash.org/faq

TRANSLATING THE APA BROCHURES ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY TO ARABIC

In 2016, LebMASH, and in collaboration with the Lebanese Psychological Association (LPA) and the American Psychological Association (APA) translated the APA brochures on sexual orientation and gender identity to Arabic. These public information brochures answer general questions about homosexuality, bisexuality and gender non-conformity and aim at increasing the public's understanding about these issues. This translation ensures that these important APA publications are accessible to the Arabic-speaking public, and is a significant step in the efforts to advance the health of the LGBT community in Lebanon.

The brochures can be accessed at:

<http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx>

<http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/transgender.aspx>



AMERICAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION



Lebanese
Psychological
Association





LEBMASH AT THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

LebMASH president, Omar Harfouch was the keynote speaker at the American Medical Association's (AMA) advisory committee on LGBT issues in Orlando where he spoke

about LGBT rights in Lebanon and the Middle East, and highlighted the experience and achievements of LebMASH.

LGBT HEALTH CURRICULUM

LebMASH worked closely with Benjamin Miller, DO MPH, to develop an LGBT health curriculum. Dr. Miller interviewed key stakeholders in the LGBT community in Lebanon as well as providers from the American University of Beirut. He then adapted curricula from the United States to the Lebanese context. This curriculum was the result of the first collaboration between the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH) and LebMASH for MPH internships and was nominated by JHBSPH for a practicum award.

The product of this collaboration was presented at the 34th GLMA Annual Conference on LGBT Health by Dr Miller, under the poster, "Standardized LGBT Health Curriculum for Lebanese Healthcare Provider Students." This was a valuable opportunity to educate numerous healthcare providers and students about with the process of developing a comprehensive curriculum specifically designed to teach Lebanese medical students the basics of LGBT health and sexual health.





PUBLICATIONS

BLOGS

"Lebanon: How Public Health Can Affect LGBT Rights,"

Equality Blog, Posted March 9, 2016 by Center for Transatlantic Relations

By Omar Harfouch, MD MPH

Available at:

<https://ctrequality.org/2016/03/09/lebanon-how-public-health-can-affect-lgbt-rights/>

"Let's Talk about Sexual Health,"

The Huffington Post, Posted October 13, 2016.

By Hossam Mahmoud, MD MPH

Available at:

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/57f-f7e63e4bof42ad3d25bdd>

POSITION STATEMENTS

Our advocacy work has made it crucial to take firm and clear stances and to be vocal about our positions. Consequently, LebMASH has released several position statements during the course of the year. Abbreviated

versions of three of these statements are featured below. A comprehensive list of our position statements in full text can found on our website.

Position Statement On The International Day Against Homophobia And Transphobia

May 17, 2016

Key Points:

- LebMASH stresses on the fact that marginalization and persecution of LGBT people have direct and indirect consequences on health.
- Article 534 of the penal code is a major pretext for persecution and discrimination .

- The Lebanese Psychiatric Society (LPS), the Lebanese Psychological Association (LPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) all affirmed that homosexuality is natural and not a disease.
- Recent rulings in Lebanon were in favor of LGBT individuals confirmed that 534 does not apply to homosexuality.

To learn more:

<https://lebmash.org/idadhot/>



Statement on World AIDS Day 2016

December 1, 2016

Key Points:

- In Lebanon, there are around 24000 people living with HIV
- They face stigma even in the health care system.

- Stigma is the result of inaccurate information

- LebMASH called for: Better Documentation, Better Education, research and advocacy

To learn more:

<https://lebmesh.org/statement-on-world-aids-day-2016/>

Position Statement on granting a transman the right to change his sex on legal documents

February 8, 2016

Key Points:

- After denying a transgender man the right to change their sex on their legal documents, the Court of Appeal ruled in his favor
- Court based its decision on 3 human rights: right to a better health, right to seek care and right to privacy

- LebMASH views this ruling as a positive step towards better recognition of transgender community's rights

To read further:

<https://lebmesh.org/lebmashs-response-granting-a-transman-the-right-to-change-his-sex-on-legal-documents/>



"Lebanon: the quiet sexual health revolution through LebMASH,"

FORMidea, Posted September 15, 2016

By Pierre Scordia

Available at:

<https://form-idea.com/2016/09/15/lebanon-the-quiet-sexual-health-revolution-through-lebmash/>

"Lebanon appeal: LGBT sexuality isn't 'against nature',"

Erasing 76 Crimes, Posted on May 17, 2016

By Colin Stewart

Available at:

<https://76crimes.com/2016/05/17/lebanon-appeal-lgbt-sexuality-isnt-against-nature/>

"Liban: la révolution tranquille de la santé sexuelle grâce à LebMASH,"

Le Huffington Post Quebec, Posted July 8, 2016

By Pierre Scordia

Available at:

http://quebec.huffingtonpost.ca/pierre-scordia/liban-droits-humains-femmes-lgbt-gais-sante-sexuelle_b_11321260.html



LebMASH's budget is based on a combination of board member contributions, individual donations and funding from different embassies and trusts. LebMASH had its fourth Halloween party and fundraiser in New York City, October 2016, which raised 22,800 USD. In addition, our budget has been supported by the following funders:

- The World Professional Association for Transgender Health
- The Embassy of the United States in Beirut
- The United States Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
- The Agnes Varis Charitable Trust





LebMASH is able to do its work through the dedication of many volunteers, and our budget is still in part based on individual contributions. Furthermore, our work would not be possible if it weren't for the amazing partnerships and collaborations that we have fostered throughout the past two years.

We are happy to open more communication channels, with both individuals and groups who share the vision and goals of LebMASH and who are dedicated to the promotion of sexual health and sexual rights.

Whether you are a local or international organization, looking to collaborate or partnership, or whether you are an individual, who is interested in supporting LebMASH, we would be happy to hear from you.

Contact us

Website

<http://lebmesh.org>

Email address

info@lebmesh.org

Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/lebmeshorg>

To make a donation

1. Netcommerce

<http://donate.lebmesh.org/>

2. Act for Lebanon

<http://www.actforlebanonusa.org/donate/>



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hasan Abdessamad, MD

Dr. Hasan Abdessamad is a board-certified Obstetrician & Gynaecologist in the United States and Canada. He received his M.D. from the American University of Beirut. He pursued OBGYN residency training at Uni-

versity Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland. He is an active member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH). He is a co-founder and first president of LebMASH.

Omar Fattal, MD MPH

Dr. Fattal is a graduate of the American University of Beirut Medical School. He also holds a Master's Degree in Public Health. He completed his residency in Psychiatry at the Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Fattal is currently the as-

sociate director of inpatient psychiatry and the Unit Chief of the Latino Inpatient Psychiatry Unit at Bellevue Hospital in New York. He is a co-founder and immediate past president of LebMASH.

Omar Harfouch, MD

Dr Harfouch is the president of the Lebanese Medical Association for Sexual Health. He is a medical graduate of Saint Joseph University in Beirut. He holds a Masters in Public Health from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg

School of Public Health with a focus on Epidemiology and LGBT health. Dr. Harfouch currently serves as a post-doctoral research fellow for the EQUALITY study at the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Chady Ibrahim, MD

Dr Ibrahim graduated as a Psychiatrist from the St Joseph University in Lebanon. He has a degree in Clinical sexology from the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium. He has worked with multiple Non-Profit or-

ganizations as a consultant psychiatrist and a certified trainer with WHO. He teaches at the Faculty of Nursing and Speech Therapy at the Lebanese University and the Faculty of Medicine at Saint Joseph University.

Hossam Mahmoud, MD MPH

Dr Hossam Mahmoud is a Board Certified psychiatrist, practicing in the Greater Boston Area. He has an M.D. from the American University of Beirut. Dr. Mahmoud completed his residency training at Northwestern Universi-

ty in Chicago. He has practiced psychiatry in the United States and Canada. Dr Mahmoud has served on the boards of directors of Heartland Alliance and the Illinois Psychiatric Society Council.



Angela Massouh, RN, MSCN

Ms. Angela Massouh is a Cardiology Clinical Nurse Specialist and a Clinical Instructor at the American University of Beirut. She graduated from the AUB with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Nursing. In 2013, she has a PHD focus-

ing on Biobehavioral research from the University of Colorado, Denver. Ms. Massouh is interested in health equity and subsequently LGBTQ health and rights in Lebanon.

Bianca Sallum, BSN, MPH Candidate

Ms Sallum has taken on the role of Executive Director at LebMASH starting February 2017, after excelling in her role as the LebMASH volunteer coordinator. After completing a BS in Biology and a BS in Nursing, Bianca is ex-

pected to graduate with a Masters of Public Health in June 2017 from the University of Balamand. She is interested in many public health issues, with a special interest in LGBT health advocacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our volunteers
[Michel Tawil](#) and [Emile Whaibeh](#) who helped write this report.

We would also like to thank all of our volunteers for all their hard work:

Jonathan Harb - Volunteer Coordinator
Ahmad Abu Mohammad
Omar Zmerli
Mohammad Haidous
Samy Taha
Maher Sleiman
Johnny Chahine

Nour Nahas
Zeinab Kassem
Hady Salameh
Evelyne Towaire
Ralph O'Dwyer
Ibrahim Abdo
Chantal Alam



LEBMASH

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