

Call for support

Patients of the Oncology Unit at Hôtel-Dieu de France

Economic context in Lebanon

Since October 2019, Saint Joseph University of Beirut (USJ) and its university hospital, Hôtel-Dieu de France (HDF), have been facing the three biggest crises of their existence: an **economic crisis** with the collapse of the national currency, a 285% inflation, a **humanitarian crisis** following the Port explosion on August 4, 2020, and a **health crisis** with the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic. The decline in the living conditions of Lebanese citizens is obviously reflected in those of our patients. **80% of the population currently lives below the poverty line.**

Despite all these difficulties, the HDF has decided to pursue its mission and has launched humanitarian initiatives to assist patients (treatment of the wounded, free vaccination campaigns, financial aid...).

These initiatives are subsidized by **the hospital's social solidarity fund**. In 2021, more than one hundred oncology patients benefited from this social fund. For example, the cost of treatment for one hundred women with breast cancer reached more than one million dollars.

Cancer, another health crisis

According to the International Agency for Research and Cancer, in Lebanon, **more than 11,500 new cases of cancer are diagnosed every year** and 10% of the population is at risk of death from cancer before the age of 75. When a citizen is diagnosed with cancer, he or she is psychologically, emotionally, socially and financially devastated.

The Oncology Unit at HDF has gained a prominent place in the country and received these patients without any discrimination. In the last two years, the unit's 64 beds have witnessed 2,500 inpatients and 17,000 day hospitalizations; noting that **more than 50% of oncology patients are in financial difficulty. Most of these disadvantaged patients, with no social security coverage, are counting on the support offered by HDF.**

Support the social fund to help the poorest

The Hôtel-Dieu de France has created a Social Fund to provide financial assistance to disadvantaged people who do not have access to Social Security or who are not covered by private insurance. The creation of this fund and its activity form an integral part of the social and public mission of HDF. In order to continue to serve these patients and provide them with adequate care, we are calling on donors who are sensitive to the humanitarian cause.

By helping HDF social fund, you are supporting a historic hospital that has always managed to meet the various challenges that Lebanon has faced, and you are showing your commitment to a key player on the Lebanese medical scene and to the only francophone university hospital in the Middle East.

Thanks to your generosity, you will help save the lives of many women and men.

We appreciate your contribution.



HDF Oncology Department

Today, HDF is perceived as a reference center for adult cancer; **20% of patients diagnosed with cancer in Lebanon are treated at HDF, including 2,000 new cases added every year**; patients referred from regional centers represent 50% of this population.

The Oncology Department not only provides medical intervention to save lives but also helps patients maintain a good quality of life by providing access to professionals such as psychologists, kinesiologists and nutritionists.

The Radio-oncology Department of Hôtel-Dieu de France was created in 1923 by Professor Lemarche; it acquired international acclaim with the launch of the brachytherapy institute by Professor Paul Ponthus who directed it between 1946 and 1975.

In 2022, the Oncology Department consists of:

- 1. 6 oncologists**
- 2. 4 medical residents**
- 3. more than twenty nurses**
- 4. a psychologist**
- 5. a nutritionist**
- 6. 2 physiotherapists**
- 7. a dozen care assistants**

This team works throughout the year with 8,000 patients.



Multidisciplinary meetings, scientific activities, clinical research and access to different therapies have given the department a national reputation making it a landmark in oncology in Lebanon. Because of its French affiliation, the role of HDF is all the more important in the country given the shortages in cancer drugs and certain curative products; the population assumes close ties with France, which would support the hospital in these times of crisis.

The patients receiving treatment at the center are of different age groups:

Number of patients who entered the Hematology-Oncology Department
2022: 3881
until september 2023: 2398

The activity of the last two years on the different radiotherapy techniques is detailed in the table below with an average of 600 treatments per year. Recently, this department has witnessed a decrease in its activity following the departure of several doctors and technicians who left Lebanon due to the crisis.

	IMRT	SBRT	Vmat SRT	IplanSRs	3D	Brachy	TOT
2023	210	32	37	0	257	0	536
2022	214	16	30	4	249	0	513
2021	209	25	29	14	292	37	606
2020	177	17	27	8	398	43	670



The Oncology Patient Journey

The patient's journey in oncology begins with a diagnostic procedure discussed at the CPM (clinical and pathological meeting) in presence of different experts to give the best therapeutic options. The hospital departments involved in these meetings are gynecology, pneumology, gastroenterology, urology, visceral and thoracic surgery. Following these diagnostic and pathological comparisons, a therapeutic plan is established and documented in the patient's file.

The oncology patient journey goes through several steps, diagnosis, imaging and biopsy, a thorough histological analysis with immunohistochemistry and molecular biology tests, followed by an extension assessment, a thorough oncology consultation, the presentation of the case in a CPM followed by a multidisciplinary therapeutic plan with the possibility of combining chemotherapy, surgery and radiotherapy. Sometimes CPMs are carried out in a palliative context; in this case, they involve a psychologist, physiotherapist and a dietician.

During the last two years, some 250 patients have benefited from the palliative care service, noting that this department is unique in Lebanon.



The journey is not limited to one day or one month; this pathology has been transformed with the advances of medicine into a chronic disease for certain forms of cancer like breast cancer. The patient then becomes individually followed during the different stages of his/her treatment: initial treatment, surgery, remission, metastasis, second line, sometimes third line of treatment, then palliative care if needed.

Costs of patient care

The table below illustrates the approximate cost of the five most common types of solid cancers in their limited curative and metastatic forms. The cost of managing curable breast cancer is US 11,000\$, which is equivalent to an average annual salary.

Total in US Dollar : Biopsy, chemo/immunotherapy, surgery and radiotherapy		
Breast	adjuvant	194,058\$
	metastatic	203,701 \$
Lungs	adjuvant	24,660 \$
	metastatic	102,434 \$
Colon	adjuvant	23,500 \$
	metastatic	35,900 \$
Bladder	adjuvant	35,000\$
	metastatic	47,634\$
Prostate	adjuvant	19,000 \$
	metastatic	32,350 \$

Let us unite so that we keep standing by the patients' side and may your valuable contribution allow us to take care of more patients.

All donations to Saint Joseph University Foundation, Beirut Inc. are tax deductible

Saint Joseph University Foundation Beirut Inc. is a valid 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization in accordance with the standards and regulations of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and your donation is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contact Us: Mrs. Cynthia Ghobril Andréa, Director of the USJ Foundation - Beirut ✉ fondationusj@usj.edu.lb

USJ Office in North America ✉ northamerica@usjbeirut.org ☎ (832) 360-6951