



The Lebanese Center for Palliative Care, Balsam

المركز اللبناني للعناية التلطيفية، بلسم

Annual Report

January – December 2013

Letter from the Director

Dear friends and supporters,

We are happy to share our second annual report with you. This report provides an overview of our activities in patient care, advocacy, capacity building and research. This year has been one of significant growth for Balsam. Our patient load has nearly doubled, both in terms of total number of patients as well as total patient-days in care. Our team has also grown to include a Social Worker as well as a second physician who joins us from the United States for part of the year.

Lebanon witnessed an important milestone in 2013 with the recognition of palliative medicine as a medical specialty by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health. Balsam played an instrumental role in this process by initiating it and mobilizing Lebanese palliative care physicians in the US to request the recognition of the specialty from the Medical Specialties Committee at the Ministry. The recognition of the specialty is critical for the development of palliative care in the country.

Balsam is proud to be playing a role in the establishment of the first hospital-based palliative care service at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC). AUBMC is the largest teaching hospital in Lebanon and many of its graduates have become leaders in health care in the region. The establishment of a palliative care program at AUBMC will not only contribute to improving the care of patients with serious illness, but also to changing the culture of health care in Lebanon and the region.

When we started our efforts in this field, few people had heard of the concept of palliative care in Lebanon. In the past year, we have noticed much more interest and activity in this field. More people recognize the term, understand the concept and appreciate the benefits of this approach. We, at Balsam, have been actively raising awareness through our activities in the media, at educational institutions and community organizations. Our efforts are being recognized and have been rewarded by support at both the local and international levels. In just the past year, Balsam team members have received scholarship support from international organizations including the International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC), St. Christopher's Hospice, and Harvard Medical School to attend courses and conferences internationally.

Balsam continues to rely on generous contributions from individuals and organizations to do its work. This year, Emirates Lebanon Bank S.A.L donated 100,000 USD to support our work and mission and has pledged to do so annually as part of their commitment to give back to the community. Balsam will apply this contribution toward developing the services it offers to seriously ill patients. We would not have been able to achieve any of this without the support of our donors, and we take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made a donation to Balsam.

We still have a lot of work to do and many challenges ahead of us. We are looking forward to another year of major accomplishments as we continue our efforts towards improving the way people live and die in this country.

We encourage you to circulate this report to anyone who may be interested in learning more about Balsam and our efforts towards advancing palliative care in Lebanon.

Best Regards,

Hibah Osman, MD, MPH
Executive and Medical Director

The Lebanese Center for Palliative Care- Balsam is a non-governmental organization that works to relieve patient suffering and improve quality of life for patients with serious illness. We provide holistic support to patients dealing with life-threatening illness by providing medical services as well as psychological, social, practical, and spiritual support within the family and home environment. We are committed to developing palliative care in Lebanon and ensuring that it becomes integrated into our healthcare system.

Our team includes:

Physician: Hibah Osman, MD, MPH



Clinical Psychologist: Michael Khoury, MD, MA



Nurses:

Janane Hanna, RN, MSN, AOCNS



Clinical Pharmacist: Dania Ghaziri, PharmD



Rebecca El-Asmar, RN, MSN, AOCNS



Outreach Coordinator: Loubna Batlouni, MPH



Hiba AlShami, RN



Social Worker: Hiba Makke, MSW



I. Patient care:

Our philosophy is to utilize an interdisciplinary team approach to support patients and their families and encourage them to make informed decisions about their medical care that are in line with their values and belief system. We aim to prevent and relieve suffering and help patients maintain the best possible quality of life despite their illness.

❖ Process of care:

We have been providing medical services primarily in the Greater Beirut area since 2010. Referrals can be made by a healthcare provider and by a patient, a friend, or a relative. The team performs an assessment to decide on the patient's palliative care needs. If a patient can benefit from palliative care she/he is admitted to Balsam's care. The Balsam team then strives to understand the patient and the family's wishes and goals, which together with the medical assessment of needs, are used to tailor a personalized plan for care.

Patients are cared for by a registered nurse under the supervision of the Medical Director. Our Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Pharmacist offer support to the nurses and physicians in the team to provide optimal care. The nurses conduct regular home visits to assess the patient and follow up on her/his care. The team is available 24/7 whenever a need arises. The team also follows the patient and family during episodes of hospitalization, and medical management is continuously coordinated with the patient's primary physician. Our Social Worker provides additional support to patients and families based on their psychosocial needs. When a patient passes away, the Balsam team continues supporting the family during the bereavement period.

Patients who reside outside the Greater Beirut Area or who do not need our full package of services may receive partial support. This could include provision of medical equipment, telephone support, or a limited number of visits for homecare planning.

❖ Patient Statistics for 2013:

Of the 90 patients admitted to Balsam's care in 2013

- The patient average age was **73**. The age range was **4 - 98** years old.
- **45.5 %** of patients were male.
- **90 %** were Lebanese.
- **70 %** had a cancer diagnosis.
- **73.3%** were admitted to care within **0 - 2** days from referral.

Table 1. Information on patient load

Status \ Year	2012		2013	
	Admitted	55	42 full support 13 partial support*	90
Not Admitted**	9		34	
Total	64		124	

* Patients who do not need full support or reside outside Greater Beirut

** Patients who do not need palliative care

Table 2. Number of patient-days of care and home visits in 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013	Percent Increase
Number of patient-days of care	2490	3418	37%
Number of home visits	885	932	5%

For more patient care related statistics please refer to the appendix

II. Advocacy

We continue to work on promoting palliative care at the community as well as at the policy level. Through traditional mass media, social media, and community outreach activities, we aim to increase awareness about the philosophy and practice of palliative care as a means to support patients with serious illness.

❖ Traditional Mass Media

Television

- **“The Doctors”** on MTV featured a report about Balsam’s multidisciplinary team and the services that the organization provides.
- Ms. Janane Hanna was interviewed on Future TV’s **“Alam Al Sabah”** in the health segment about palliative care and its importance.
- **MTV News** featured a report about a patient’s journey with cancer and how Balsam supported her and helped her maintain her quality of life despite her illness.
- Dr. Hibah Osman and the family of a Balsam Patient were featured on **Al Arabia News** to discuss how Balsam supported the family during their loved one’s illness.

Radio

- **Rotana Delta** interviewed Mr. Mohammad Saab – who was a Balsam nurse at the time - about palliative care and Balsam’s services.
- **Sawt Al Shaab** hosted Dr. Hibah Osman who was interviewed about the establishment of Balsam and the importance of palliative care for seriously ill patients.

Articles in magazines and online news resources

- **Elnashra** published four articles about palliative care based on interviews with Balsam team members. The topics were: palliative care vs. euthanasia, prevention and treatment of pressure ulcers, the pros and cons of artificial feeding, and dignity therapy.
- **eHospice** published five articles about Balsam. Topics included: the official recognition of palliative medicine in Lebanon, Dr. Hibah Osman being certified as the first palliative care specialist in Lebanon, the plan for establishment of the first hospital based palliative care service in Lebanon, the difficulties related to the provision of palliative care services in Lebanon, and the funding support Balsam received from Emirates Lebanon Bank.
- **Laha Magazine** interviewed Dr. Hibah Osman about breast cancer and the role of the family in supporting breast cancer patients.
- **Al Moghtareb Magazine** featured an article about palliative care and Balsam's accomplishments.
- **Dar Al Khalij** published an article about palliative care as a new medical specialty in Lebanon and about the services that Balsam offers.
- **MainGate -American University of Beirut** featured a piece about Balsam's establishment and Dr. Hibah Osman's journey with palliative care.
- **Medizine-Lebanese American University** featured an article about what healthcare providers need to know regarding palliative care and the common misconceptions physicians have regarding end of life care.
- **Barra Magazine** published an article containing general information about research, capacity building, patient care, and advocacy at Balsam.

Press releases in newspapers

- **Annahar Newspaper** published an article announcing the licensing of Dr. Hibah Osman as the first palliative care specialist in Lebanon.
- The generous donation made by Emirates Lebanon Bank to support the mission and services of Balsam was announced in **Al Mustaqbal Newspaper** and **Al Moghtareb Magazine**.
- The official recognition of palliative care as a specialty by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health was announced in **The Daily Star**, **Annahar Newspaper**, **Al Mustaqbal Newspaper**, **Lebanon Files**, and the **National News Agency - Lebanon**.

❖ Balsam Online

Table 3. Likes, followers, and visits in 2012 and 2013

	2012	2013	Percent increase
Facebook Likes	215	257	20%
Twitter Followers	105	141	34%
Website Visits	6987	11863	70%

❖ Community Outreach

Research Design Course - American University of Beirut

Three Masters of Public Health graduate students at the Faculty of Health Sciences chose palliative care as the topic of their research project assignment for the PBHL 310 course during the Fall Semester of the Academic Year 2012-2013. Ahlam Mothana, Farah El Sayed, and Sarah Armoush worked with Ms. Loubna Batlouni at Balsam to define a research question and develop a proposal. The students' final research proposal was about the knowledge and attitudes of physicians in Lebanon towards pain management and the prescription of opioid analgesics.

The Women's League - American University of Beirut

The Women's League hosted a talk about Palliative Care entitled "Helping people live well despite their illness" on the 14th of January at the American University of Beirut. Dr. Hibah Osman explained the concept of palliative care and introduced Balsam to the audience.

Civic Engagement and Volunteer Fair - American University of Beirut

Balsam participated in the Civic Engagement and Volunteer Fair on the 10th of April. This is the second time Balsam participates in this yearly event where students choose organizations they would like to volunteer with. The fair is an opportunity to inform visitors about Balsam's work and raise awareness about the importance of palliative care.

46th Middle East Medical Assembly – American University of Beirut

Dr. Hibah Osman contributed to a panel discussion on partnerships between academia and nongovernmental organizations at the MEMA on the 8th of May. Dr. Osman discussed the benefits and barriers of involving students in the work of nongovernmental organizations based on her experience at Balsam.

Communication for Health Course - American University of Beirut

Four Masters of Public Health graduate students at the Faculty of Health Sciences chose palliative care as the topic of their communication project assignment for the HPCH 333 course during the Spring Semester of the Academic Year 2012-2013. Jinane Abi Ramia, Judi Hazim, Nathalie Khazzaka, and Riham Miri designed a campaign on "End-of –Life Conversations" for Balsam under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Loubna Batlouni.

Alzheimer's Association Lebanon

Dr. Hibah Osman gave a talk entitled "Palliative Care; Supporting Patients & Caregivers during Serious Illnesses" at The Alzheimer's Association- Lebanon on the 29th of August.

Helping Hand Society - National Evangelical Church of Beirut

The 'Helping Hand Society' invited Dr. Hibah Osman to speak about her work and experience in palliative care on the 15th of November. Dr. Osman described Balsam's mission and work with patients with serious illness.

III. Capacity Building

We continue to seek training opportunities and attend conferences to further develop our skills and knowledge and ensure that we are providing the best care to our patients and families. We also provide training to healthcare providers through lectures, courses, and workshops.

❖ Capacity building for Balsam staff

13th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care - Prague

Dr. Hibah Osman, Ms. Loubna Batlouni, and Mr. Mohamad Saab (previous Balsam nurse) attended the 13th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care that took place in Prague, Czech Republic from the 30th of May till the 2nd of June. This was an excellent opportunity to learn and network with providers of palliative care from around the world. Dr. Osman also gave a lecture on the development of palliative care in Lebanon at the International Primary Palliative Care Network meeting held during the conference.

St Christopher's Hospice Multi- Professional Week - London

Ms. Janane Hanna and Ms. Rebecca El-Asmar attended a clinical training program in palliative care at St. Christopher's Hospice from September 16th - 27th. The course included one week of classroom based training and a clinical placement for one week.

Dr. Danielle Sara trains Balsam nurse

Dr. Danielle Sara, previously the Medical Director of Weinstein Hospice in Atlanta, Georgia visited Lebanon and joined Balsam team between September 25th and November 25th. She trained Ms. Hiba Al Shami, and offered her skills and expertise by sharing her experience in hospice and palliative care in the United States. She has become part of the Balsam family and plans to continue to support Balsam with patient care and training of staff.

Palliative Care Pharmacists Network Conference - Birmingham

Dr. Dania Ghaziri visited the United Kingdom October 1st – 4th to attend a conference organized by the Palliative Care Pharmacists Network (PCPN) at Aston University. During her visit to the UK, Dr. Ghaziri was hosted by fellow Clinical Pharmacists at St Ann's Hospice in Manchester and John Taylor Hospice in Birmingham. This gave her the opportunity to visit their pharmacies and exchange knowledge and experience.

Palliative Care Education and Practice Course at Harvard Medical School - Boston

Dr. Hibah Osman attended the Palliative Care Education and Practice (PCEP) course at Harvard Medical School from the November 5th - 12th. PCEP is a highly regarded intensive course for physician and nurse educators in palliative care. Dr. Osman was offered a partial scholarship from Harvard Medical School to attend the course. She was able to attend the course with the support of the American University of Beirut Medical Center. During her visit to Boston, she spent 2 days as an observer at Massachusetts General Hospital learning about the structure and function of the Outpatient Palliative Care clinic and the Inpatient Consultation Service at MGH.

❖ Capacity building provided by Balsam

Palliative and End of Life Care for nurses - Beirut

Dr. Hibah Osman, Ms. Rebecca El Asmar, and Ms. Janane Hanna contributed to this course for practicing nurses at AUBMC. The course took place at the Hariri School of Nursing on January 16th. It was developed in collaboration with the Clinical and Professional Development Center at the medical center.

Palliative and End-of-Life Care Master Class - Beirut.

The first Master Class in Palliative and End-of-life Care was held at the American University of Beirut on October 18th and 19th. It was organized by the Hariri School of Nursing and the Salim El-Hoss Bioethics and Professionalism Program and attended by 63 healthcare professionals. Dr. Hibah Osman and Ms. Janane Hanna contributed to the organization of the course. They also gave lectures along with Balsam team members Dr. Michael Khoury and Ms. Rebecca El Asmar.

IV. Research

Home healthcare in Lebanon - Human and Health Magazine

Dr. Hibah Osman and Ms. Loubna Batlouni submitted an article entitled “Home Healthcare in Lebanon” in Human and Health Magazine (a publication of the Lebanese Syndicate of Hospitals). It was published on the 1st of January in issue number 22.

13th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care

Balsam team presented two abstracts at the 13th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC). The posters were entitled “Barriers and Facilitators to the Delivery of Home-based Palliative Care Services in Beirut” and “Tailoring Legacy Building Activities to the Lebanese Setting”.

The International Palliative Care Network Conference 2013

Dr. Hibah Osman was invited to be a member of the 2013 Planning Committee of the International Palliative Care Network Conference. Ms. Loubna Batlouni and Dr. Osman submitted a presentation to the online conference -as part of its lecture series -entitled “Development of Palliative Care in Lebanon”.

Special Issue about Palliative Care in the Lebanese Medical Journal

Lebanese Medical Journal published a special issue about Palliative Care in Lebanon in October. The issue focused primarily on the recommendations of the four subcommittees of the National Committee on Pain Control and Palliative Care. Dr. Hibah Osman and Ms. Janane Hanna contributed to the manuscript submitted by the Subcommittee on Practice entitled “Setting practice standards for palliative care in Lebanon”.

V. Accomplishments and Awards

American Board certification in Hospice and Palliative Care

Dr. Hibah Osman has become certified in Hospice and Palliative Medicine by the American Board of Family Medicine. This certification is an important achievement and will help her fulfill Balsam's mission of advancing palliative care in Lebanon.

St Christopher's Hospice Bursary

Ms. Janane Hanna and Ms. Rebecca El Asmar were awarded the St Christopher's bursary in February. The bursary allowed them to attend Multi-Professional Week and included full payment of course fees, accommodation, travel expenses, meals and a small subsistence allowance over the two weeks.

The International Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Travel Scholarship

Ms. Loubna Batlouni and Mr. Mohammad Saab (previous Balsam nurse) were awarded a travel grant to cover their attendance of the 13th World Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) by the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC).

Palliative Medicine officially recognized as a specialty in Lebanon

The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health issued decree number 1/1048 recognizing Palliative Medicine as a specialty on the 28th of June. Balsam is proud to have played an instrumental role in advocating for this change by initiating the process and mobilizing physicians to request the recognition of the specialty from the Medical Specialties Committee at the Ministry of Public Health. This decree was issued with the support of Minister Ali Hasan Khalil, Dr Walid Ammar Director General of Health.

First hospital-based palliative care service in Lebanon

The American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) announced the establishment of the first hospital-based Palliative Care Service on the 1st of August. Balsam is working closely with the medical center to support the development of this service and Dr. Hibah Osman is spear-heading this effort at AUBMC.

First palliative care specialist in Lebanon

Dr. Hibah Osman became the first physician to be licensed as a Palliative Care Specialist in Lebanon. The decision was announced on the 16th of September by the Medical Specialties Committee at the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health.

VI. Fundraising

Our services are offered at no cost to ensure that they are accessible to anyone who may need them. We are funded exclusively by private donors.

Emirates Lebanon Bank SAL supports Balsam

Emirates Lebanon Bank S.A.L (ELBank) embraced the cause of palliative care and has pledged to support Balsam. On the 13th of September, Mr. Varouj Nerguizian, ELBank's Chairman and General Manager, presented Dr. Hibah Osman with a cheque for 100,000 USD in the presence of

Balsam Board members and ELB Board members and senior staff. Balsam will apply this contribution toward developing the services it offers to seriously ill patients.

The Women's League at the American University of Beirut

The AUB Women's League donated four nursing bags in December in memory of Mrs. Catherine Bashshur. The bags are fully equipped with medical supplies and equipment that the nurses use for assessing and treating patients during their home visits.

VII. Testimonials

"Thanks to your efforts we were able to provide our mother with the care, love, and respect she deserved in her final days. We can't thank you enough and hope that you will continue to support others through their difficult moments as well." N.S

"بلسم خلونا نحس إنو كل شي بصيرو كل شي معقول وهني بأمنولنا كل المساعدة. كنا أريح بكتير ورايقين أكثر بكتير وقت ياللي رجعنا على البيت. وماما كانت كتير مبسوطه بالبيت. صار في عنا كل الوقت إنو نحكي مع بعض و نقعد مع بعض... نودع بعض" ن.د.

"They came from the first day till the end. I cannot imagine how it would have been without Balsam. There is no way we could have handled this situation alone." M.H.

"ساعدوني و شالوا عني هم كبير. كانت زوجتي كتير مرتاحة و عاملونا كلنا بطريقة كتير منيحة. انا حقيقة كتير ممنون الهن. الله يعطيهم العافية" س.ج

If you would like to support Balsam, refer a patient, or simply get additional information visit our website: www.balsam-lb.org, or contact us on: 01-748574

You can follow us on twitter on **Balsam-LCPC**, like us on Facebook at **Balsam- The Lebanese Center for Palliative Care**, and subscribe to our Youtube channel **BalsamLCPC**

Address: Chafic Haddad Building, ground floor
Sidani Street – Hamra
P.O Box: 113- 6656 Beirut, Lebanon

Acknowledgement

We appreciate Emirates Lebanon Bank S.A.L's generous donation in support of Balsam's mission.



EMIRATES LEBANON BANK S.A.L.
بنك الإمارات ولبنان

Appendix: Information on admitted patients for the years 2012 and 2013

a. By gender

Year \ Gender	2012		2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	27	49	41	46
Female	28	51	49	54
Total	55	100	90	100

b. By nationality

Year \ Nationality	2012		2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Lebanese	50	91	81	90
Non-Lebanese*	5	9	9	10
Total	55	100	90	100

*American, French, Palestinian, Syrian, Iraqi

c. By age

	Age range	Average age	Age groups												Total	
			≤20		20-40		40-60		60-80		80-90		≥90		No.	%
			No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
2012	21-90	67	0	0	3	5	15	27	23	42	13	24	1	2	55	100
2013	4-98	73	1	1	1	1	11	12	44	49	26	29	7	8	90	100

d. By diagnosis

Year \ Diagnosis	2012		2013	
	No.	%	No.	%
Cancer	47	85	63	70
Non-cancer*	8	15	27	30
Total	55	100	90	100

*Neurological diseases, pulmonary diseases, organ failure, stroke, Myelodysplastic Syndrome, Peripheral Vascular Disease, Aortic Stenosis

e. By days from referral to intake

Days \ Year	0-2		3-5		6-8		>8		Total		Average
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
2012	41	75	9	16	2	4	3	5	55	100	2.07
2013	66	73	15	17	9	10	0	0	90	100	1.8

f. By days in care

Days \ Year	≤10		11-50		51-100		101-300		>300		Total		Average
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
2012	19	34	23	42	6	11	5	9	2	4	55	100	46
2013	34	38	39	43	5	6	10	11	2	2	90	100	42