



---

B A L S A M Q U A R T E R L Y

July - September 2018

Support · Care · Guidance

عناية · احتضان · إرشاد

---

# I N E S S E N C E

## *Her Way*

*When the legendary May Arida passed away recently, the accolades for this outstanding Lebanese personality flooded in. Among other things she was remembered as someone who knew her own mind, refused restrictions and tackled life on her own terms. As she lived, says her daughter Linda Hochar, so she died.*



May became very ill but after two distressing and frustrating sojourns in hospital, she decreed no more hospital. She insisted on going home. "We were so worried about what to do", says Linda. "Two different hospitals and various nurses but nothing had worked out".

"During this period May was uncharacteristically aggressive," Linda continues. "She was angry, restive and refused to accept care from the nurses we brought her. All she wanted was to be left alone with her cook and her maid. We were in crisis, seriously at a loss when our relative Dr. Naji Khoury from Johns Hopkins, Maryland called Dr. Hibah Osman from Balsam. We had never heard of Balsam, we did not know it existed."

Life turned around when Balsam nurse Chadia Fayad arrived to talk to May and the family. "May liked Chadia a lot," Linda says. "She listened to what she had to say and became calm. So did we. Chadia said we should accept what May wants and try to make her as comfortable as possible. We got her a full time nurse who knew Balsam's methods and was knowledgeable and understanding. And we were able to begin a new routine and reduce May's anxiety".

"With Balsam there was always someone at the end of the phone. This gave May peace of mind and it reassured us as the family," Linda continues. "My only regret was that I had not known about Balsam earlier". Linda's sister Maria visiting from Washington DC said she had been perplexed not to be able to find hospices in Lebanon and that discovering Balsam had been a big relief saying, "Everybody should have a Balsam in their lives."

When the time came for May to let go, her daughters say she did it with characteristic determination. "She was very aware, talking quietly every day until the time when she said, 'I want to die,'" Linda says. After that she gradually slipped into a coma eventually passing away, peacefully.

"People here should know about Balsam," Maria adds. "They should know what to do under these circumstances. There is humanity in personal contact when a dying person needs comfort. My mother felt secure in her own house surrounded by the family she loved and who cared for her. She passed away with dignity and respect ending her life just as she had lived it, completely on her own terms."

May Arida RIP 13th May 2018

---

# M Y B A L S A M

## *Evolution*

*Dr. Aline Zakhem never planned to join Balsam, it was not part of her carefully mapped out career plan. And yet she did join, as a consultant physician. That done, it never occurred to her that one day she would be Balsam's Medical Director, and now she is.*



So how did she arrive at this unplanned destination and how does she feel about it?

"Ah, it's a long story", Dr. Zakhem says, "And somehow it was not by chance. I was working on the AUBMC Oncology floor when Nurse Janane Hanna (see Balsam Spring '18 newsletter) approached me. She had been watching me and noticed that I spent time talking to my patients, taking care of their welfare, as well as their treatment.

She told me, you are different from other doctors, and you speak our language, would you like to join us at Balsam?"

"Then I met Hibah (Dr. Osman, Balsam founder) in Fall 2014 and we did indeed speak the same language. I agreed to help Balsam, initially as an Infectious Diseases consultant and joined Balsam early 2015. I was happy helping out and never imagined I would eventually be asked to fill Hibah's shoes."

In fact, shoes or no shoes, Dr Zakhem's choice became almost inevitable. "Balsam just grows on you," she says. "You see life in a different way. Balsam has shaped me many ways as a doctor and a person. We deal with suffering and personal loss, the sudden onset of illness, children losing their fathers, wives losing their husbands and we learn to count our blessings. Balsam made me appreciate how grateful I am for my life and that makes me a better physician and human being. In the hospital you are the 'hero' you save people, with Balsam you enter people's homes, you touch their lives. You are welcomed as a stranger and you become family "

Dr Zakhem's 'day job' is as an AUBMC physician in the faculty of internal medicine, division of Infectious diseases, specialty: infection in immune-compromised oncology

patients. So how does she cope with her added responsibilities?

"I do have another full time job and sure I have other responsibilities while at the same time I need to be available 24/7, but I am a 'lean' operator and I know how to balance my life. The Balsam team makes the big difference and I cannot make it without them. They make my life easier. We are Balsam family! We are open to discussing everything, open to criticism, open to change."

"It's still early days and we have to see how things develop. But I am trying my best," she reflects. "The main impact for me, though, is how much Balsam has molded me in my interaction with my patients. I am more empathetic and emotional but in a good way. I have great positive energy and internal peace and it shows in my work. I got that from Balsam and I am able to share it with my patients."

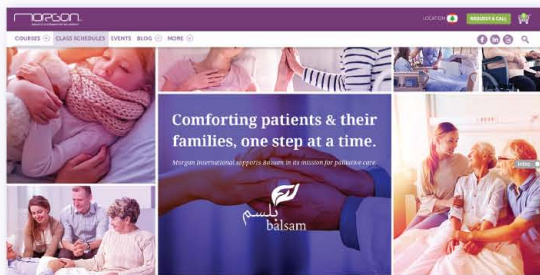
---

## R E C E N T L Y



### **Global Networking**

In September Balsam applied to join the UN Global Compact Network Lebanon (UNGCNL), the world's largest voluntary corporate citizenship initiative. UNGCNL is a platform for learning, policy dialogue, and partnership based on the UNGC Ten Principles (under the four categories of human rights, labor rights, environment, and anti-corruption) and the newly formulated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are currently over 160 GCNL Lebanese private and social sector members (corporations, SMEs and social enterprises, civil society organizations) we are pleased Balsam is one of them.



---

### **New Campaign**

Balsam is grateful for the help and support offered by Morgan International (<https://www.morganintl.com/>) with its new campaign to promote Balsam's work and raise donations through its client base.

Morgan offers professional certifications and diploma programs in the fields of finance, accountancy, human resources, marketing, and logistics. Their Balsam campaign includes featuring a Balsam film in their class announcements and in their reception area, a social media campaign to raise awareness about Balsam's work, and donation boxes in their offices and classrooms. Thank you Morgan for spreading the word.

---

B A L S A M Q U A R T E R L Y

Thank you

