

## **The Calcium Metabolism and Osteoporosis Program at AUB as "WHO Collaborating Center for Osteoporosis and Metabolic Bone Disorders".**

The World Health Organization officially designated the Calcium Metabolism and Osteoporosis Program-Endocrine Division, at the School of Medicine, as the "WHO Collaborating Center (WHO CC) for Osteoporosis and Metabolic Bone Disorders", with Dr Ghada El-Hajj Fuleihan as the Collaborating Center Director, in Dec 2010.

This designation reflects the seminal achievements of the Calcium Metabolism and Osteoporosis Program, since its foundation in 1998, in the field of metabolic bone disorders, as detailed on the Program's website (<http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~webcmop/>). These include the conduct of epidemiologic and interventional studies in osteoporosis and hypovitaminosis D, providing a major resource for the education and training of under- and postgraduate students, and the establishment of a WHO fracture risk assessment (FRAX) model for Lebanon, the first FRAX on-line calculator in the region. The Program also constituted the core for the development of National Osteoporosis Guidelines, of a National Task Force on Osteoporosis and a national multidisciplinary society for Osteoporosis and Metabolic Bone Disorders. The Program's landmark achievements recently culminated in the nomination of the Program Director to Co-Chair the International FRAX Initiative Task Force appointed by the International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) and the International Society of Densitometry, and an invitation to lead the regional Middle East North Africa Osteoporosis Audit, sponsored by the IOF.

There are currently over 800 WHO collaborating centers in over 80 Member States working with WHO on areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies. None in the region have received the designation to exclusively focus on metabolic bone disorders. AUB joins the very few WHO CC in Europe dedicated to research in this area of health, such as the WHO CC at the University of Sheffield, University of Geneva, and University of Liege. WHO Collaborating Centers are research institutes, parts of universities or academies, which are designated by the Director-General, with the full support of the Minister of Public Health, to carry out activities in support of the Organization's programs. The terms of reference for the WHO CC for Metabolic Bone Disorders at AUB are to serve as a center of excellence and referral for the study and management of hypovitaminosis D, osteoporosis, and other metabolic bone diseases in Lebanon and the Eastern Mediterranean Region; support the WHO in gathering, analyzing, synthesizing and disseminating information on these disorders; and support policy makers in generating and disseminating policies, recommendations and guidelines, stemming from the above activities, to optimize health in general, and musculoskeletal health in particular, in Lebanon and the region.

This designation for a WHO CC, the first at FM, is yet another testimony of AUB's commitment and extensive contributions to further research and advance health in Lebanon and the region.