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Care of People
with Epilepsy in Lebanon
(ECAL)

The associations for care of people with epilepsy have a major role to play especially in developing countries, where health care infrastructure and qualified personal are insufficient.

In North Africa and Middle East, where within 23 countries, only 6 have an IBE representatively (Iran, Saudia Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco). The 17 remaining countries could be divided in 5 categories: (1) High income countries with developed health care system but social aspects not yet well structured (Qatar, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait), (2) High income countries with less developed health care system but social aspects not yet well structured (Oman, Bahrain and Libya), (3) Middle to low income countries with developed health care system (Jordan and Palestine), (4) Middle to low income countries with less developed health care system (Algeria, Sudan and Syria), (5) Low to very low income countries with less developed health care system (Mauritania and Yemen).

Whatever is the outcome in each country of our region, and no matter the structure of the health care system, patients and their families have to be well organized and create associations to fight epilepsy and its consequences. Physicians and especially neurologists have to assist the desperate patients to create associations and to focus on patient's education.

The Association For Care of People with Epilepsy in Lebanon (ECAL) was created in 2001. It's main goal is to stop the stigma against epileptic patients and to put an end to kicking those people from schools as early as age 10, or may be earlier just because they are epileptic, the thing that is a common behavior among all developing countries. What unfairness, inhumanity, and injustice it is to deprive a child of receiving proper education and helping him/her become independent! Are epileptic people not the people who need education the most? Other goals are to fight social exclusion and professional discrimination.

It was only in 2009 that ECAL felt stronger because the East Mediterranean Regional Committee of IBE was created and started its annual meetings. In April 2009, representatives from KSA, Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia met in Cairo and decided to start a development plan for the period 2009-2012. In August 2009, more attendees joined in the conference held in Budapest to emphasis the importance of contacting NGOs in other Mediterranean countries for the purpose of new memberships. In 2010, new members from Palestine and Sudan joined in the conference that was held in Dubai. All attendees evaluated the efforts that members made during the year and the related outcome. In November 2010, during the 6th Maghreb Neurology Congress, representatives from Mauritania, Algeria, and Tunisia met to discuss the epilepsy main objectives. By then, Moroccan accomplishments included establishing the drug bank, making partnerships,

launching a website, and doing expositions. Lebanese accomplishments included the Promising Strategies Award winning, starting awareness campaigns, and starting income generating projects. KSA also did awareness campaigns, distributed CDs and brochures on the topic of epilepsy, and created video tapes for this purpose. Tunisia and Iran did other activities that were run in schools.

Active members of East Mediterranean region of IBE have a pivotal role to play in improvement of quality of life of patients suffering from epilepsy through education and sensitization activities, and have also to highlight for politicians different ways in which epilepsy care could be improved in our region.

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