

For Immediate Release



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## **AUB: First Scientific Study Demonstrates Enormity of Waste Crisis Effect on Public Health in Lebanon**

If you work in an area awash with random waste dumps that are sometimes burned, you have to be quite cautious, because you are 400% more likely than others to catch diseases in the digestive and respiratory systems, according to a study conducted by a team from the American University of Beirut (AUB) scientific researchers. The team was supervised by Dr. Monique Shaaya from AUB's Faculty of Health Sciences, and consisted of Third Year medical students Rami Morsi, Rawan Safa, Shirine Fawwaz, Serge Baroud and Jad Farha.

The research team selected two sample groups of Lebanese male workers, all aged between 18 and 60, in two different regions. The first sample of 111 people worked in a waste-free area. The second sample consisted of 110 people working in an area swept with random waste dumps that are repeatedly burned.

The study ran in December 2015-February 2016 and was based on a questionnaire answered by the workers about their health conditions. It turned out that those who work in areas where waste prevailed suffered from constant fatigue, headache and insomnia, compared to the workers in waste-free areas. These health conditions were not limited only to these symptoms. There were other health problems in the digestive and respiratory systems. Those who worked near the random waste dumps spoke of nausea, diarrhea and vomiting, while others complained from severe shortness of breath, cough, and runny nose. Workers said that the severity of symptoms resulted in hospitalization for some of them.

The mismanagement of the waste problem and the burning of waste have resulted in effects and consequences on the health of workers in areas where waste dumps prevailed, with at least a 400% increase of severe health symptoms, compared to workers who were not exposed to waste dumps.

This ratio indicates that exposure to waste, being near it or breathing air polluted by waste burning, lead to serious health hazards, especially in the respiratory and digestive systems.

According to the researchers of this study, it is possible that this crisis will result in a more dangerous impact on vulnerable groups such as the children and the elderly.

The study proposed some interventional policies to contain this health disaster, such as reducing the factories' waste generation by modifying the production and recycling methods, and adopting preventive protection measures such as wearing masks, adopting a regulatory framework and national guidelines for the treatment of waste at the national and regional levels, and the creation of a national committee to follow up and monitor the process of organizing training on waste disposal.

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**Note to Editors**

**About AUB**

Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 700 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,500 students. AUB currently offers more than 130 programs leading to bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full-service 420-bed hospital.

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