



# YEARLY NEWSLETTER

Established in 2013 as a cooperative platform for physicians, scientists, and healthcare professionals from institutions in the East and Mediterranean area with the goal of sharing experience, initiation of cooperative trials, and establishing common strategies to achieve optimization of the care of pediatric oncology patients.



## CURRENT STATUS



**> 700** Members  
from **130** Centers  
in **28** Countries

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THE PRESIDENT**  
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### \* **NEW ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

At its 8th Business meeting in Yerevan-Armenia, the POEM board of directors adopted a new process for the election of its members to ensure better representation from the membership, from more than 100 centers all over 28 countries.

### \* **PREVIOUS BOARD ACHIEVEMENTS**

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Asim F. Belgaumi, MD**

Professor

Department of Oncology

Aga Khan University, Medical College

Karachi, Pakistan

Welcome to our first POEM newsletter for 2021. In fact, welcome to 2021; especially since 2020 was such an unexpectedly difficult year for the whole world. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted our personal and professional lives to an unprecedented level. We started with not knowing how to care for our patients, whether we should give them therapy or not. And when we wanted to give them the treatment they needed we weren't sure if the supplies of required medications would be available. But we adapted, and learned, and worked with our patients and families to patiently maneuver through the uncertainties towards rational approaches to childhood cancer treatment. Pediatric oncology care providers, forever striving to do more.

We also didn't get to meet each other, and that to me has been equally frustrating. Pediatric oncology is a small community, a family that loves to have reunions, share stories and experiences, and learn from each other. Conferences, workshops, and meetings, our usual "family reunions", were first postponed and then made virtual. "Virtual" is defined as something that is 'almost, but not quite' the real thing, and that is what these virtual encounters on computer terminals feel like. We couldn't hold our POEM Business meeting in Oman or travel to Canada for the SIOP congress.

But POEM remained active, and in some ways was more active than in previous years. We have certainly grown; our membership has increased by a whopping 49% and we now stand at 760 members. We started by relooking at the way we work and restructured our administrative configuration. A new composition and methodology for selection of the Board of Directors were implemented; we held our first elections according to this and chose an expanded Executive Committee, which has started working enthusiastically since October 2020.

The POEM group website has been revamped and boasts much better content and functionality. This is, obviously, a work in progress, and will continue to evolve and improve. We now have a 'Members Only' area, which permits better communication and collaboration opportunities. We are also working to enhance the educational content and hopefully will soon be able to post lecture videos and publications.

We are continuing with the Case Discussion fora and are starting the Nursing Journal club. Our first distance learning experience with workshops was a resounding success. The two POEM-St Jude workshops on Methodologies in Cancer Research and Registries and Nursing allowed us to reach out to more people and to utilize teaching methodologies that could not be used otherwise. This has led to the development of a new resource for our members; provision of mentorship for research and the formulation of a Research Advisory Committee.

POEM has also been more visible externally. We have published papers as a collaborative group, co-sponsored conferences, and been invited to work with the WHO-EMR. We are receiving recognition as a significant regional and international player in the pediatric oncology arena.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Abdul Hakim Al-Rawas (Immediate Past President) and Dr. Samar Al-Muwakkat (Immediate Past Treasurer), and all the members of the Board of Directors who completed their term in October. It is their guidance and hard work that has led POEM to where it is at. Their support and advice continue to be needed as we move forward, expanding our scope and enriching the pediatric oncology experience in our region.

Stay safe and God bless you all.

## NEW ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS

At its 8th Business meeting in Yerevan-Armenia, POEM board of directors adopted a new process for the election of its members to ensure better representation from members at more than 100 centers from 28 countries.

**We thank the outgoing board members and the previous executive committee members for their precious time and contributions over the past 3 years**

### Outgoing board members:

Dr. Abdul Hakim Al Rawas (Oman)  
 Dr. Ahmet Demir (Turkey)  
 Dr. Amina Beayou (Libya)  
 Dr. Amir Mohammed (Iraq)  
 Dr. Anissa Trabzi (Algeria)  
 Dr. Ghada Sousan (Syria)  
 Dr. Mahwish Faizan (Pakistan)  
 Dr. Mohammad Awad Al Khatib (Sudan)  
 Dr. Muhammad Faisal Khanani (UAE)  
 Dr. Oumaya Fawaz (Syria)  
 Dr. Raghad Al Saeed (Iraq)  
 Dr. Riham Abdul-Aziz (Egypt)  
 Dr. Samar Muwakkit (Lebanon)  
 Dr. Sihem Barsaoui (Tunisia)  
 Dr. Syed Ahmer Hamid (Pakistan)  
 Dr. Zehra Fadool (Pakistan)

### Previous executive com. members:

Dr. Abdul Hakim Al Rawas (President)  
 Dr. Asim Belgaumi (Vice-president)  
 Dr. Raya Saab (Scientific director)  
 Dr. Samar Muwakkit (Treasurer)  
 Dr. Sima Jeha (SJCRH representative)

**We welcome our colleagues to the new board of directors and executive committee members. We anticipate that their skills and experience will be an asset to our Board and we look forward to working with them in the near future.**

Dr. Ahmad Sabhan (Iraq)	Dr. Khalid Ghanem (Syria)
Dr. Alaa El Haddad (Egypt)	Dr. Maryam Tashvighi (Iran)
Dr. Ali Naderi (Iran)	Dr. Mohammad Khattab (Morocco)
Dr. Amita Trehan (India)	Dr. Mohamad Najajreh (Palestine)
Dr. Asim Belgaumi (Pakistan)	Dr. Muhamad Rafie Raza (Pakistan)
Dr. Atk Rau (India)	Dr. Naser Al Zain (UAE)
Dr. Ayman Saleh (Qatar)	Dr. Nisreen Khalifeh (Kuwait)
Dr. Azim Mehrvar (Iran)	Dr. Nur Olgun (Turkey)
Dr. Burça Aydın (Turkey)	Dr. Rasha Al Youssef (Syria)
Dr. Dima Hamideh (Lebanon)	Dr. Rawad Rihani (Jordan)
Dr. Emad Ebeid (Egypt)	Dr. Reem Al Hayek (KSA)
Dr. Faten Fedhila (Tunisia)	Dr. Safa Faraj Al Badri (Iraq)
Dr. Gamal Al Zain (Yemen)	Dr. Salwa Saad Ali (Libya)
Dr. Gevorg Tamamyan (Armenia)	Dr. Samar Rhayem (Tunisia)
Dr. Girish Chinnaswamy (India)	Dr. Siham Cherkaoui (Morocco)
Dr. Halima Saeed (Pakistan)	Dr. Suleiman Al Sweedan (Jordan)
Dr. Hamoud Hodeish (Yemen)	Dr. Tezer Kutluk (Turkey)
Dr. Husain Al Mukharraq (Bahrain)	Dr. Wasil Jastaniah (KSA)
Dr. Iman Sidhom (Egypt)	Dr. Yasser Wali (Oman)
Dr. Keso Mamageishvili (Georgia)	

### New executive com. members:

Dr. Asim Belgaumi - President	Dr. Amita Trehan - Member
Dr. Iman Sidhom - Vice president	Dr. Khalid Ghanem - Member
Dr. Nisreen Khalifeh - Treasurer	Dr. Raya Saab - Scientific director
	Dr. Sima Jeha - SJCRH representative

## A GLANCE ON PREVIOUS BOARD ACHIEVEMENTS



Membership growth by **49%**  
 Centers increase by **26%**



Updating By-Laws



Joining of 5 new countries to POEM:  
**Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Georgia, Nepal, Sri Lanka.**



Formation of new committees:  
**Research advisory committee**  
**Website committee**  
**Training committee**



Working groups restructuring and formation of new discussion groups



Launching of the new POEM website

# REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

## A DIRECTED ON-SITE PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY NURSING WORKSHOP

The Pediatric Oncology East and Mediterranean (POEM) Group in collaboration with the Clinical and Professional Development Center (CPDC) at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) and the Pediatric Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Armenia - Hematology Center after R. Yeolyan, conducted the pediatric oncology Training Program in Yerevan, Armenia on September 30 – October 5, 2019. The program aimed at developing the knowledge and skills of Registered Nurses in managing pediatric oncology patients in a pediatric oncology hospital in Yerevan- Armenia. It provided the participants with the needed knowledge and skills that guide the delivery of competency-based nursing care that is evidence-based for pediatric oncology patients.



## PATHOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT (SYRIA-LEBANON)

1. Second reading of problematic pediatric oncology cases, to identify strengths and needs
2. Based on collected data, propose solutions to bolster pathology infrastructure in Damascus, specifically in pediatric oncology
3. A two-year project



## RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

Saab, R. et al., Impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on pediatric oncology care in the Middle East, North Africa, and West Asia region: A report from the Pediatric Oncology East and Mediterranean (POEM) group. *Cancer*. 2020; 126: 4235 - 4245. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.33075>

Basbous, M. et al., Childhood cancer care in the Middle East, North Africa, and West/Central Asia: A snapshot across five countries from the POEM network, *Cancer Epidemiology*, 2020, 101727, ISSN 1877-7821, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.canep.2020.101727>.

Saab, R. et al., The Pediatric Oncology East and Mediterranean (POEM) group – A regional collaborative platform for childhood cancer healthcare professionals, *Pediatric hematology oncology Journal*, Volume 5, Issue 1, 2020, Pages 3-6, ISSN 2468-1245, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.phoj.2020.03.002>.

Burges M, et al. Assessment of Retinoblastoma Capacity in the Middle East, North Africa, and West Asia Region. *JCO Glob Oncol*. 2020 Oct;6:1531-1539. doi: 10.1200/GO.20.00321. PMID: 33064626; PMCID: PMC7605382.

## CALL FOR IMPACTFUL PROJECTS

### Proposal submission & research facilitation

- Research proposal platform
- Scientific Committee
- Oversight & mentorship
- Connecting researchers across POEM

WWW.

To submit your research proposal, make sure to visit the online research proposal application page on the POEM website.

<https://poemgroup.org/researchProposals>



### In preparation:

- Training programs mapping across POEM region
- Nursing capacity building within POEM

# 2020 ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

2020 was a catastrophic year due to the COVID pandemic. Many of the onsite activities were halted all over the world. Consequently, virtual activities and events emerged. POEM group was one of the entities that followed this pathway where it shifted its pre-scheduled onsite 2020 meetings and workshops to the online platforms. With great success, the POEM group conducted its yearly business meeting and two workshops virtually in collaboration with St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (SJCRH) and the Continuing Medical Education (CME) Office at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC).

## POEM - ST. JUDE NURSING WORKSHOP OCT. 23-24, 30-31 - 2020

- Divided over 4 days
- 33 participants from 11 countries
- 6 speakers from 5 countries
- Virtual setup with breakout rooms
- AMA accreditation
- COVID sharing experience
- Case studies

### Topics covered:

- Nursing management of solid tumor
- Oncological emergencies and nursing management
- Management and care of central line devices
- Chemotherapy safety throughout the administration process
- Case studies: nursing management of chemotherapy side effects
- Nursing management of hematological disorders
- COVID-19 and pediatric oncology nursing
- Psychosocial support for children with cancer
- Patient and family education
- Bone marrow and stem cell transplant
- Immunotherapy in pediatric oncology
- Case studies: nursing management of patients receiving chemotherapy
- Management of long-term side effects of childhood cancer and treatment
- Nursing research in pediatric oncology
- Improving nursing practice: quality Improvement

## POEM - ST. JUDE RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES WORKSHOP NOV. 2-3, 9-10 - 2020

- Divided over 4 days
- 38 participants from 12 countries
- 10 speakers from 5 countries
- Virtual setup with breakout rooms/mural
- AMA accreditation
- Abstract/Proposal discussions

### Topics covered:

- An overview of clinical research and categories of biomedical research
- Cancer data registries
- Formulating your research question
- Statistical analyses
- Writing & publishing
- Three breakout sessions
- Abstracts overview and revision
- Exercise in writing the study background and defining the objectives
- Exercise in defining the statistical plan and methods



## COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Virtual **Best of ASCO-Hematology** conference, held by Tawam Hospital and Abu Dhabi Health authority on January 15 and 16, 2021, in collaboration with the Pediatric Oncology East and Mediterranean (POEM) group and Emirates Society of Hematology.



### WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer

The World Health Organization (WHO) held a regional virtual consultation meeting on the Global Initiative on Childhood Cancer (GICC) on January 25-26, 2021. POEM group participated as a potential collaborator for GICC implementation efforts in the region. During the meeting, areas of GICC implementation efforts were discussed, including advocacy/awareness, clinical management, capacity development, access to care and medications, surveillance, and support.

## 9TH BOARD OF DIRECTORS BUSINESS MEETING

The 9th Business meeting was held online on October 4, 2020 during which a new Board of Directors was welcomed.

The main points that were highlighted in this meeting included:

- Alignment of all tenures: Tenure of the Board (4 yrs.), tenure of Executive Committee (2 yrs.), and Scientific Director (4 yrs.)
- Dissolution of the working groups/organizational structure change
- Creation of new committees: Training, Website and Scientific committees
- Possibility of integrating the French language interface into POEM website with the possible utility of Arabic language interface and other languages
- Overview on case discussion forums, educational training assessment, POEM Nursing groups, and ALL project
- Discussion of the opportunities to enhance and expand the existing collaborations with St Jude Global especially in training, nursing, metrics and performance, healthcare systems, and research
- Announcement of Dr. Asim Belgaumi as the new president
- Continuation of Dr. Raya Saab as the Scientific Director and Dr. Sima Jeha as ex-officio representative of St. Jude Children's research hospital
- Election of the new executive committee members: Dr. Iman Sidhom as Vice President (President -Elect), Dr. Nisreen Khalifah as Treasurer in addition to Dr. Amita Trehan and Dr. Khalid Ghanem as committee members



## Future events and activities



Research workshop  
2021 Business meeting



Third Scientific meeting & workshops  
2022 Business meeting



## POEM Membership

To ensure you receive POEM updates and opportunities, please take a minute to review and update your POEM membership information now on the sign-in page on [www.poemgroup.org](http://www.poemgroup.org).

## Contact us

POEM group central office at the American University of Beirut (AUB).

For any questions or further information, please contact us at:



[info@poemgroup.org](mailto:info@poemgroup.org)

or visit our website: [www.poemgroup.org](http://www.poemgroup.org)

