

## EMBMT CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



From its birth in 2008, Eastern Mediterranean Blood and Marrow Transplantation (EMBMT) membership has grown significantly as evidenced by the number of physicians, scientists and healthcare workers who have joined the organization. As an incumbent Chairman of this organization, I consider myself fortunate to have participated along with my colleagues in the milestone and success of this organization in the MENA

region.

Indeed, EMBMT will come a long way in fulfilling its goals. To facilitate in reaching its objectives, we established working committees to address issues of common concern, initiated cooperative trials, established common strategy to achieve optimization in the field of HSCT, created a membership directory to provide a platform for contact and successfully organized annual symposium for the members to share their experiences and research studies.

The continuous success of EMBMT through close cooperation among local and regional centers is further strengthened by regular scientific and business meetings, most recently in Dubai, UAE and Geneva, Switzerland. Furthermore, the growth and development of the nursing group as active members of EMBMT has been remarkable. In this year's EMBMT Congress in Geneva, four (4) abstracts were presented.

Hence, I would like to thank and acknowledge all the members who provided unceasing support of the organization. To optimize patient care

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and continue our march as an international group for research activities associated with Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation, constant advocacy of members along with hard work are required.

**Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh, MD**  
Chairman, EMBMT

## EDITORIAL

Neutropenic diet- how strong is the evidence?

This summer or after-the-summer issue of the Newsletter is a good opportunity for me to welcome you back from your happy summer holidays, hoping that you all have had a chance to relax and recharge, and get ready for an upcoming busy and fruitful year. I find the newsletter also a wonderful opportunity for me as the chief editor to share with you some of the interesting readings I come across, particularly thoughts and ideas that in my humble opinion may represent a basis for a study at the EMBMT level.

Hematopoietic cell transplantation is associated with a significant risk of infectious complications, due to multiple factors such as prolonged neutropenia, severe immune suppression and disruption of the gastrointestinal mucosal and skin integrity, to name a few. Patients are usually placed on low bacteria/neutropenic diet to help reduce the incidence of such complications. A recent article and an editorial note in *Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation* (*Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation*, Volume 18, Issue 9, Pages 1385-1390) question this practice and report that the quality of the existing evidence is generally weak. The published study compared -in a retrospective manner- the outcomes of a cohort of stem cell recipients who did not receive a strict neutropenic diet to a well-matched historical cohort of the same size that received a standard strict neutropenic diet; the study showed a higher rate of microbiologically confirmed infections after resolution on neutropenia in patients who had the strict neutropenic diet! One major drawback of this study however is the fact that the majority of the patients were autologous recipients.

I see these data as a possible starting point for a much needed, large prospective randomized study at the EMBMT institutions level. Of course, the issue of non-neutropenic diet in an allogeneic setting has to be studied more cautiously because of the associated severe immune suppression and GVHD.

Those interested, please contact me on my email, maybe we can have a proposal ready in time for the next EMBMT meeting.

**Mouhab Ayas, MD**

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## EMBMT SCIENTIFIC MEETING SYNOPSIS

*Fazal Hussain, MD, MPH*

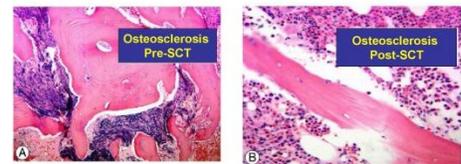
The 2<sup>nd</sup> EMBMT Scientific Symposium entitled "State of the art symposium on Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation for Hematological Malignancies" was held on 24 November 2011 at Intercontinental Hotel, Festival City, Dubai and was a great success. It was heavily attended by the local, regional and international experts in the field of HSCT. The outstanding guest speakers, renowned from around the world as the opinion leaders, delivered state-of the art lectures in their respective fields. The objective of the symposium was to present the latest developments in the field of hematologic malignancies with a focus on HSCT. It was geared to provide interaction and exchange of knowledge and experience among local, regional and international HSCT experts. Accredited by the American Academy of Continuing Medical Education for 8 CME hours, the symposium was a comprehensive review of the updates, emerging trends and current practices in the evolving field of hematology.

Drs. Ghavamzadeh and El Solh were the symposium chairmen, Dr. Al-Rustamani was the symposium local chairman and host and Dr. Aljurf was the Scientific program Chair for this Scientific Meeting. The meeting started at 8:00 AM by the introductory remarks of Dr. Hassan El Solh and welcome remarks by the local host, Dr. Ahmad Al-Rustamani. The superb arrangements and the heartwarming welcome by Dr. Al-Rustamani were greatly appreciated by all the attendees.

The opening session of the scientific meeting was aimed at HSCT in CML and was chaired by Dr. El Solh and Dr. Ghavamzadeh. The speakers for this session were Dr. John Goldman, Dr. Eduardo Olavarria and Dr. Ghulam Mufti. The first speaker, Dr. Goldman, talked about the Place of Allogeneic Transplantation for CML in 2011. After providing an excellent update, he concluded that SCT is indicated for patients in advanced phase (if possible) and he also cited that the results of allo-SCT for CML have improved in recent years whereas, the place of allo-SCT for children remains unclear. He also mentioned that patients who respond to imatinib for CML in early CP do remarkably well for many years while patients who fail imatinib and then a 2G-TKI are candidates for allo-SCT. Following Dr. Goldman was Dr. Olavarria who

talked about the role of HSCT in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms. At the end of his presentation, he concluded that SCT could offer a curative option to selected patients with Chronic Myeloproliferative Neoplasms; Non SCT prognostic classifications correlate with SCT outcomes and Pre SCT co-morbidities have a major impact on survival. RIC-SCT shows promising results. Last to deliver in the first

### Improvement of Bone Fibrosis



session of the symposium was Dr. Mufti, who talked about Myelodysplastic Syndromes (MDS). He summarized that overall disease free survival for MDS after HSCT is around 30%-40%. He then added that the use of alternate donor as a source for HSCT is feasible however, prospective studies are still needed to determine the impact of age on outcome of transplant. Dr. Mufti sealed his discussion by prompting everyone that overcoming disease relapse post HSCT is the most important challenge for the future.

Second session immediately followed after the intriguing panel discussion and a short break. This session focused on HSCT in Lymphoid Neoplasia and was chaired by Dr. Mohamed Kharfan-Dabaja and Dr. Salam Alkindi. Dr. Stephen Mackinnon introduced his topic of SCT in Follicular Lymphoma. He emphasized that Autologous Transplant is not generally recommended as first line for chemosensitive patients outside clinical trials while in Allogeneic Transplant, Myeloablative should be avoided and he also added that centre effect maybe important. Right next to Dr. Mackinnon was Dr. Christian Gisselbrecht whose focus was on SCT in DLBCL. After providing an excellent update, he concluded that a new profile of relapses and refractory patients after Rituximab is seen and there are prognostic factors affecting response and survival. Dr. Anna Sureda with the Role of SCT in Hodgkin's Lymphoma as a subject of her presentation succeeded. She cited important points in her discussion including; ASCT is the standard therapy for HL patients in chemosen-

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sitive relapse; new therapeutic options are needed since the results of ASCT are significantly worse in those patients with primary refractory disease; maintenance therapy with new drugs would eventually improve the long term outcome of ASCT in patients at high risk of relapse; allo-SCT is an effective salvage therapy for patients relapsing after an ASCT; non-relapse mortality is not a significant issue currently, therefore,

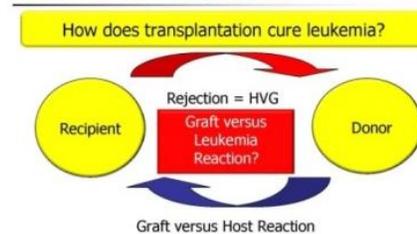
major effort should be dedicated to decrease the relapse rate after allo-SCT and; results of MUD transplant are not significantly different from HLA id sib allo-SCT. Dr. Emili Monteserrat followed and presented the role of SCT in Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia (CLL). He identified few significant lessons from transplants as the "last-leukemia cell" is difficult to be killed by chemo(radio)therapy alone; GVL is what makes the difference in ASCT vs. AlloSCT; and lastly, cellular therapy has a huge potential.

The third session of the conference gave emphasis to HSCT in Acute Myeloid Leukemia. Dr Fawzi Abdel-Rahman and Dr. Ahmad Ibrahim served as the moderators and the speakers were Dr. Maher Albitar, Dr. Mohamad Mohty, Dr. Peter Bader and Dr. Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh. This session started with Cytogenetics and Molecular Markers in Acute Myelogenous Leukemia (AML) elaborated by Dr. Albitar. It was tailed by Dr. Mohty with his discussion on Transplantation and Novel Therapeutic Options in AML. He provided an overview of the subject and finished by pinpointing that AML therapy remains non-specific for most patients. Furthermore, he said that emerging therapies are promising, and targeted therapies started addressing small subgroups, but allo-SCT will remain the recommended treatment for many patients. He also highlighted the importance of tumor burden and quality of CR prior to allo-SCT as major determinants for outcome. Dr. Peter Bader talked about Role, Indications and Perspectives of SCT for Pediatric Acute Myeloblastic Leukemia (AML). After presenting the most current data, he imparted that preemptive cellular immunotherapy is adequate to prevent impending relapse. Fourth speaker for this session was Dr. Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh who discussed the role of HSCT in Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia (APL). He concluded that more of the transplanted patients treated at the time that Arsenic or ATRA was not available (Availability and cost), because of this there is more CR1 transplanted patients. Dr. Ghavamzadeh continued by saying that DFS and

OS between Arsenic treated patients and others was not statistically significant until today and he also added that HSCT is a possible choice for treatment of refractory and relapsed APL patients.

Last session of the scientific program was focused on HSCT in Acute Lymphoid Leukemia with its moderators of Dr. David Dennison and Dr. Amir Ali Hamidieh. The keynote speakers for this session were Dr. Anthony Goldstone and Dr. Peter Bader. Dr. Goldstone talked about Adult ALL-To Transplant or not to transplant-this is the question." He concluded that we should stop thinking of transplant as "toxic" and chemotherapy as "non-toxic". He also emphasized the need for more studies. Dr. Bader was the last speaker for the session and highlighted the role, indications and perspectives of SCT for SCT in Pediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). He provided an excellent program finale and clinched by providing some significant take home messages including SCT can cure resistant leukemia; Allogeneic SCT MSD is equivalent to MUD in given protocols; Immunotherapy is principally effective as pre-emptive treatment and MRD pre transplant MRD post-transplant and Chimerism are important parameters to reduce relapse risk but not for all patients.

**Considerations  
Principles of SCT**



This superb program was wrapped by excellent panel discussion, question answer session and closing remarks by the symposium chairman Drs. El Solh and Ghavamzadeh and the symposium local chairman, Dr. Al-Rustamani at 5 PM.



(EMBMT Scientific Symposium; 24 November 2012, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.)

## EMBMT BUSINESS MEETING – Dubai, 23 November 2011

The 7<sup>th</sup> EMBMT Business Meeting was held on Wednesday, 23 November 2011 at Al-Baraha Ballroom, Intercontinental Hotel, Festival City, Dubai, UAE and was attended by delegates from all the member countries of EMRO region.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Hassan El Solh welcomed all the attendees and briefly introduced the delegates from each country. Dr. El Solh acknowledged all members for their stellar efforts, outstanding support and significant achievements. This was followed by his synopsis of the EMBMT history since its inception in 2008, achievements, ongoing projects, future plans and collaboration with WBMT, CIBMTR and EBMT. He reminded the Chairs of each working committee to put more efforts to invigorate the currently ongoing projects. He also announced and congratulated Dr. Ardeshir Ghavamzadeh as the new Interim Chairman of the EMBMT and as recipient of the CIBMTR Distinguished Service Award, respectively.

Having accepted the Chairmanship, Dr. Ghavamzadeh presided the meeting and took the opportunity to thank Dr. El Solh and Dr. Aljurf for their outstanding leadership, superb initiatives and absolute dedication to make the EMBMT a world class organization. He awarded special plaques of appreciation to Novartis Oncology (Dr. Mohamad Rammal and Ms. Danielle Sayes) and Roche Oncology (Dr Ayoub Moten) and to Dr. Ahmed Alrustamani for their outstanding support to EMBMT and their remarkable efforts in making this event memorable.

The meeting was highlighted by other relevant presentations and updates presented by its respective Chairs or Officer-in-charge such as:

- APBMT meeting and EMBMT representation (Dr. Ghavamzadeh)
- Briefing on the WBMT Workshop and Symposium held in Hanoi Vietnam (Dr. El Solh)
- Discussion on holding the future WBMT workshop in Saudi Arabia in partnership with EMBMT (Dr. El Solh/Dr. Aljurf)

- Overview of the very successful EMBMT Quality Management Course held in Dubai, UAE, from 29 June-1 July 2011 (Dr. Amir Ali Hamidieh)
- Update on the proposed Data Management Course to be held at Dubai, UAE on May 2012 (Dr. Mohamed Kharfan-Dabaja)
- Comprehensive overview of the EMBMT Scientific Symposium, “State of the art symposium on Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation for Hematological Malignancies”, to be held on 24 November 2011 (Dr. Ghavamzadeh)
- Update of all the active research projects and publications (Dr. Aljurf)
- EMBMT website update and webmail utilization (Dr. Hussain)
- Progress report of projects (Chairperson of respective Working Committees)
- Presentation of proposal for Research Grant Funding and the criteria for the Grant guidelines (Dr. Aljurf)
- Updates on EBMT Business Meeting held at Gothenburg, Sweden (Reggie Belkhedim)

The last part of the meeting dwelt on the future plans for the Scientific Symposium unanimously decided that it will be held every two years.

In the closing remarks, Dr. Ghavamzadeh on behalf of Drs. El Solh, Aljurf and the entire Board of Directors thanked all the attendees and the speakers for the exuberant success.

With the enthusiasm and active participation, the 7<sup>th</sup> EMBMT Business Meeting concluded as another milestone for the EMBMT.

*Fazal Hussain, MD, MPH*  
*EMBMT Treasurer*

## EMBMT NURSING GROUP AT EBMT Geneva - 02 April 2012

A message from *Reggie Belkhedim*, the Chairman of EMBMT Nursing Group:

Twelve nurses from 3 different countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region travelled to the beautiful metropolis of Geneva to join the 28<sup>th</sup> EBMT Nursing Group meeting in conjunction with the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the EBMT Group. The delegation comprised of Saudi Arabia (9), Iran (4), Oman (2) and Lebanon (3). Saudi Arabia has the largest number of nursing representatives who were all sponsored by KFSH&RC Nursing Affairs with special citation to **Amal Al Barnawi**, Nursing Program Director, for all her efforts to make it. In this meeting, the EMBMT Nursing Group chaired a session and presented four (4) abstracts:

### SESSION ON MANAGING CHANGE

Reggie Belkhedim  
(Saudi Arabia)

### PRESENTATION:

The education journey of primary immune deficiency patients: From diagnosis to transplant

Amal Mohammed,  
Nazima Ades  
(Saudi Arabia)

### POSTER:

Addressing oncology nursing issues by bridging language barriers

Aida Atanante  
(Saudi Arabia)

### POSTER:

Prophylactic use of doxycycline reduces incidence of catheter-related bloodstream infection in recipients of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation: A single-centre experience

Samar Okaily,  
Mohamad Baydon  
(Lebanon)

### POSTER:

Bone marrow harvesting as an extended role for the BMT nurse: A pilot experience in Oman and recommendations for the EBMT nursing group

Yusra Alhabsi  
(Oman)

The presentations of our delegates were very well received. This only shows that the EMBMT Nursing group is growing so well within and with the EBMT. It is indeed a big honor that our integration with the prestigious organization such as the EBMT has shown so much fruition. This time, we did not only come to gain knowledge but have grown with confidence to share. Let

us keep the momentum by keeping our concerted efforts and exhibiting our interests for professional growth. Let us keep in mind our mission that our integration with EBMT is not just about recognition but more importantly, for greater know-how for the love and care for our patients.

*“This time, we do not only come to gain knowledge but we have grown with confidence to share.”*

One of the best parts this meeting has promoted is the Nursing Study Day which had been very helpful and successfully held by the different European nursing groups. I have participated in some of these activities and I vouch its relevance and importance. I therefore exhort everyone to take interest and make extra efforts to join such studies which are usually held annually by some of the Nurse groups. In fact, this has inspired and encouraged us that we should do our own Study Day in the EMRO region.

EMBMT Nurse Group is truly making its mark in the EBMT organization. I would like to share the news that as part of this clear recognition, and in all modesty, I have been tasked to be the Chairperson for the EBMT Nurse Group Communication and Network Committee (CNC). I cannot take pride for myself but truly a great honor for the EMBMT as a whole. I definitely attribute this due recognition to our member-delegates for their active participation, involvement and excellent representations in all the meetings we have attended.



Finally, allow me to express my gratitude for the support – moral, financial or otherwise, we received from our superiors and/or sponsors in our respective hospitals that had helped and made our participation to the congress a reality and success.

### EMBMT NURSING GROUP

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Amal Mohammed  
Vice Chairman

Rahma Al Mahrizi  
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1. Nursing Practice and Quality
2. Nursing Research
3. Professional Development

## EMBMT BUSINESS and SCIENTIFIC MEETING - DUBAI, UAE



## EMBMT BUSINESS MEETING - GENEVA, SWITZERLAND



## EMBMT OFFICE

### newscorner



**Assignment of a Head Office Manager. Ms. Reggie Belkhedim** had been assigned as the Manager of the EMBMT Head Office. She will supervise, monitor and coordinate all administrative affairs of the secretariat. She will also be responsible with communications among members, organizing or initiating necessary meetings and liaising with the directors of the organization. Reggie has been actively engaged in all these activities in the past and with her dynamic personality, is doing even more for the improvement and smooth running of headquarters' operation. We wish her all the best in this role that will surely be beneficial to the organization.

For EMBMT communications and issues, you may email her at: [rbelkhedim@kfshrc.edu.sa](mailto:rbelkhedim@kfshrc.edu.sa)



**New EMBMT Secretary.** The EMBMT Secretariat cordially welcomes **Lara Baggayan** as the new EMBMT Secretary. Lara joined the organization late May 2012 and assumes all secretarial duties and as assistant to the Head Office Manager. She will be bridging important communications between the leadership and its members. Currently, Lara had been instrumental in laying out the upcoming EMBMT Member's directory and giving a new look on the newsletter. She exhibits creativity and diligence in her work which is surely an added asset to the organization. We exhort everyone to extend our usual support and cooperation especially through corresponding to the communications she will be sending out to you.

You may reach Lara at her email address: [prbaggayan@kfshrc.edu.sa](mailto:prbaggayan@kfshrc.edu.sa) or Tel: +9661 464 7272 Ext. 32408

## ANNOUNCEMENT INVITATION

**Share your thoughts.** If you have thoughts to share, write down and send it to us. The EMBMT newsletter welcomes all contribution from its members. You may write a short letter, inspirational anecdotes, suggestions or announcements from your own country. We will be providing a corner for all members who wish to help make our newsletter as interesting as possible. Your letter-contributions will be most welcome.

**EMBMT NG Nurses' Study Day.** Stay tuned everyone. EMBMT Nurse Group will hopefully hold its 1<sup>st</sup> Nurses' Study Day in the near future. This will be a major activity for the EMBMT Nurse group which will be very beneficial to all nurses heavily involved in BMT/Stem Cell transplants. We encourage everyone to participate in this activity. Date and venue will be announced as soon as decision and program has been finalized.

**Nurse Training in BMT.** Proposal for Nurse training on BMT transplants is underway. If approved and logistics are finalized, 4 selected nurses from Tunisia, Jordan and Oman will be invited and sponsored to come to King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia for BMT training for more or less 6 weeks.

**Appointment of Chairperson in the CNC of EBMT NG.** EBMT Nurse Group recently appointed Reggie Belkhedim as Chairperson of its Communication and Network Committee. We take honor in this appointment for the added recognition it serves to EMBMT. We appreciate your wishes as much as your support.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>EMBMT Business Meeting</b>                 | November 2012<br>Dubai, UAE  |
| <b>2012 ASH Annual Meeting and Exposition</b> | 8-11 December 2012<br>Georgia World Congress Center<br>Atlanta, GA         |
| <b>2013 BMT Tandem Meeting</b>                | 13-17 February 2013<br>Salt Palace Convention Center<br>Salt Lake City, UT |
| <b>EBMT Meeting</b>                           | April 2013<br>London, UK   |

## SEARCH WORD PUZZLE

C	R	S	A	E	P	R	O	T	O	C	O	L	H	Y
I	G	U	T	A	G	Q	V	J	O	S	N	I	E	Z
R	A	O	F	B	O	U	I	Y	T	A	C	L	K	P
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A	D	P	K	T	R	L	S	A	M	B	L	O	O	D
I	U	R	D	R	Z	E	E	H	B	J	O	P	N	I
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P	E	P	T	T	W	Y	G	P	A	T	I	E	N	T
F	T	U	X	W	O	R	R	A	M	D	B	P	A	X

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