

Interview with the National Pharmacovigilance Program's Senior Clinical & Technical Manager

Pharmacovigilance (PV) is an important pillar in healthcare systems worldwide, as was successfully advocated by the National Pharmacovigilance Program launching event on September 14th. Recognizing the importance of such a program in promoting the safe and effective use of medicines namely on the occasion of the World Patient Safety Day, Al Manar TV dedicated a section of their morning program to promote the Lebanese National Pharmacovigilance Program (LNPVP).

On September 27th, 2022, the program's Senior Clinical and Technical Manager, Dr. Abeer Zeitoun, was invited to Al Manar's daily morning talk show "نهار جديد" to elaborate on the LNPVP's scope of work and to answer all queries.

“ Patients and healthcare professionals should remain vigilant about drug-related adverse events for the safe and effective use of medicines. ”

The interview was broadcast live at 9:00 a.m. and was initiated by a brief overview of the launching event. Quotes from the Minister of Public Health Dr. Firass Al-Abyad's speech were recalled to emphasize on patient safety through medication safety.

Dr. Zeitoun then used the infamous thalidomide tragedy of the 1960s to display that drugs can have a harmful effect under certain circumstances, and to highlight the turning point in medical history that awoke the need for a PV system in regulating patient safety.

Then at the request of the interviewer, she proceeded to explain the structure of the LNPVP. Like most countries, Lebanon operates a national PV system as part of its healthcare policies, with the goal of ensuring timely identification of suspected safety problems in medicinal products.



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She then acknowledged the relentless efforts of the PV team under the management of Pr. Rita Karam, that qualified the LNPVP as full member in the World Health Organization Programme for International Drug Monitoring (WHO-PIDM).

The definition of PV was further elaborated by Dr. Zeitoun when asked about the specific steps involved in PV: from the detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of Adverse Events (AEs) or any other possible drug-related problems. In the ultimate goal of raising awareness among patients, viewers were also acquainted with the LNPVP's scope of work once those AEs are received, and how they are fed into VigiFlow (a national database) then Vigibase (WHO global database). She concluded by emphasizing on the urgent need for the PV system in the light of drug shortages, counterfeit medications, and increased self-medication among patients in Lebanon.

Med Safety App



<https://youtu.be/kRFaiDVzDz4>

“ The LNPVP's role relies on passive reporting from both patients and healthcare professionals, which is essential for detecting signals. ”

In its final section, the interview touched base on the most important stakeholders in the PV cycle: the reporters. After highlighting the essential role of healthcare professionals in spreading awareness on the PV program and the reporting tools, Dr. Zeitoun provided the audience with a practical example on how to proceed when encountering any AEs. Since the implementation of the early PV activities coincided with the launch of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, she gave the example of a patient experiencing an AE following a COVID-19 vaccine, and elaborated on the steps they should follow in order to ensure a proper PV cycle.

A promotional video describing the Med Safety App was finally displayed to further familiarize patients on the importance of reporting adverse events post both medications as well as COVID-19 vaccines to the LNPVP.

