

## **Digihealth project : Innovative digital Skills & Teaching Methods for Effective Health Education in Lebanon & Syria**

DIGIHEALTH is a capacity building for higher education project cofounded by the Erasmus + Programme of the European Union. This project aims at promoting excellence, creative and innovative digital Teaching & Learning (T&L) approaches through advanced information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, to improve quality of Higher Education in health sciences sector and, thus, to prepare well-qualified graduates who are able to adapt to changing healthcare environment, meet societal expectations and sustain healthy environment in Lebanon and Syria.

The project is coordinated by Linnaeus University (Sweden) and includes a consortium of three European institutions (University of Genoa, Italy; Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Spain & UNIMED, Mediterranean Universities Union; Italy), four Lebanese universities (Lebanese University, Beirut Arab University, Lebanese International University & Modern University for Business and science) and three Syrian universities (Damascus University, Arab Internatioanl University & University of Hama).

The main expected outcome of DIGIHEALTH is the establishment of two national centers for innovative Teaching & Learning in Higher Education (one in Lebanon and one in Syria) that will serve as hubs for training health educators on novel digital skills and interactive T&L methods, in addition to developing e-modules that exploit digital revolution.

The Lebanese University (LU) holds a key role in this project. Indeed, it is the leader of the work package 3 (WP3) of this project and is responsible of the center's set-up. The contact person from the LU is the dean of the faculty of pharmacy Pr Assem AlKak. A committee was established to prepare and execute a work plan for this WP, it is chaired by the dean Assem AlKak and includes Racha Karaky, Pascale Salameh, Marianne Haddad, Roula Bouassi, and Inaam Nasrallah. The committee meets regularly (usually weekly) and finalized the work plan for the WP3 and will begin its implementation.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update : Genoa workshop**

The Lebanese University (LU) represented by Dr Pascale Salameh, Dr Racha KARAKY and Mrs Inaam Nasrallah participated in the workshop hosted by University of Genoa (UNIGE) Department of Education Sciences (DiSFor) in Genoa, Italy on June 10-13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. Organized within the framework of digihealth, a capacity-building project cofunded by Erasmus + program of European, this workshop aimed at sharing experiences and best practices of Genoa University centers and departments of educational technology training and teacher professional development in Italy with the Lebanese and Syrian partners as well as providing knowledge about policies, strategies, regulations and plans to run the centers.

The workshop included 15 participants from partner Lebanese and Syrian Universities. Participants visited several established T&L (Simulation and AdVanced training center -SIMAV) and research (Center for Influenza Research and other Transmissible Infections, CIRI-IT & Advanced Biotechnology Center,CBA) centers in Genoa that served as key models for the establishment of the national Lebanese and Syrian centers. The last center visited was the center for the production of video material for e-learning at the University of Genoa (DISFOR-UNIGE). The responsible of the center presented the experience of the University of Genoa with distance learning especially in health sciences domain. Finally, the LU team presented to the consortium their work plan for the national center's set up before the conclusion of the workshop and the distribution of certificates of attendance to all participants.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update: Santiago de Compostela workshop**

Dr Racha karaky and Dr Marianne Haddad from the faculty of pharmacy represented the Lebanese University in the workshop organized in Spain by Universidade de Santiago de Compostela on September 10-12<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This is the second of a series of workshops organized within the framework of digihealth, a capacity-building project cofunded by Erasmus + program of European union.

The workshop gathered 14 participants from seven Lebanese and Syrian partner institutions and aimed at sharing the experience of the University of Santiago de Compostela and its best practices in innovative and digital techniques related to medical education. Participants visited the USC-SEMERGEN, a simulation center in emergency medicine where they had the opportunity to get hands-on experience with the different mannequins and facilities available in the center. Participants also visited the Center for Research in Molecular Medicine and Chronic Diseases CIMUS in particular the drug discovery platform. The general coordinator of the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) in the USC-Faculty of Medicine, Prof Victor M Arce Vazquez shared with the participants his vast experience in this field. Moreover, the participants were introduced to the USC virtual campus platform used by the staff and the students of the faculty of Medicine in the USC. The workshop ended by a debriefing session where participants valued the activities of the workshop and thanked the organizers for it.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update: Dissemination session in LU**

The digihealth committee in the faculty of Pharmacy organized a dissemination session about the digihealth project on September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019. About 25 academic and administration staff members of the faculty were present. First the dean Pr Assem AlKak welcomed the attendees and insisted on the need of such a project to the Lebanese University in general and the medical faculties in particular. Pr AlKak also emphasized the importance of hosting the educational technology training center within the faculty of pharmacy and mentioned the funding provided by Erasmus

plus. Then, Dr Racha Karaky presented in depth the digihealth project. She explained its objectives, expected benefits and outputs, the different work packages. She explained the role of each partner institution in the consortium and stressed on the key role of the Lebanese University as the leader of the work package related to the center's set up. Dr Karaky also shared with the attendees the acquired knowledge gained while visiting centers serving the medical education during the workshops hosted by the two partner institutions : University of Genoa- Italy and Universidad de Santiago de Compostela- Spain. Finally, Dr Karaky encouraged the attendees to a wider participation in the teachers' survey that was sent to them by e-mail and informed the attendees about the upcoming activities that are scheduled in the project.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update: MBA students join the digihealth LU working group**

The first meeting between four representatives of the MBA class of this academic year and the members of the digihealth LU committee took place on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Ihsan Karaky, Marwa Karnib, Samer Barake, Christabelle Bitar and Nadia Ghosh are the members of the MBA class primary team who will collaborate with the LU committee for the planification of the center and the development of the list of equipment to be purchased. The meeting was a first step towards clarifying key points of the project prior to signing the project charter.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update: Dissemination session and workshop on the use of ICT in higher education**

Within the framework of Digihealth project, the Faculty of Pharmacy organized a workshop on the use of ICT in higher education on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020 at 11h00 am. The workshop was animated by Dr Gilbert Sawma, instructor at the Faculty of Education and specialist in education technology. Faculty members, technical and administrative staff as well as MBA students from the Faculty of Pharmacy attended the workshop. Dr Sawma introduced online learning to the participants, he described key concepts in eLearning, presented different types of ICT used in the education field and enumerated the advantages of using them in the pharmacy education in particular. Furthermore, Dr Sawma shared with the participants several eLearning tools and invited them to directly apply some of them during the workshop. Participants highly appreciated the workshop and a lot of faculty members decided to apply some of the eLearning tools in their courses.

### **Digihealth (Erasmus + project) update: First training on innovative and digital T&L in BAU**

As the digihealth project enters its second year and following the identification of the needs of universities in teaching and learning (T&L) methods, the first training on online learning was hosted in Beirut Arab University from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Fifty participants from Lebanese and Syrian partner institutions attended the training. The LU was represented by Drs Racha

Karakay, Pascale Salameh, Marianne Haddad, Inaam Nasrallah and Rola BouAssi as well as the MBA students: Ihsan Karaky, Marwa Karnib, Christabelle Bitar and Samer Barakeh.

Prof Alastair Creelman from Linnaeus University was the main facilitator of this training. He generously shared with the participants his large experience on online Learning. Indeed, he introduced several tools that can be used for online learning and platforms for online meetings, he warned participants from technical digital challenges and animated a highly interesting workshop about the ABC method to design varied and engaging courses. The training also included a presentation about open educational resources. Finally, participants were invited to form groups and submit projects aiming at improving their T&L methods by making them more active and collaborative and by designing activities using digital tools. The development of these projects will be assisted online by Italian facilitators from Unimed.