

# Audiology Education

## Innovative International Initiatives

By James W. Hall III

A two-part series of ACAE Corner articles in 2015 was devoted to the topic of global audiology education. The first article provided an international overview of audiology educational models and programs in different countries and geographical regions (Hall, 2015a).

As noted at the outset of the article, over 90 percent of the world's population has little or no access to hearing health care. The Middle East was identified as one region with woefully inadequate audiology services. The follow-up article in *Audiology Today* addressed "emerging strategies and efforts to expand and

enhance the quality of audiology education around the world" (Hall, 2015b). Two examples of emerging strategies and efforts were cited. One was an audiology program in development then at American University of Beirut. The other was an online master's degree program in audiology at Salus University. I am happy to report that both of these examples of emerging strategies were implemented within the past two years.

The American University of Beirut (AUB) is a rather unique educational institution. Founded 150 years ago by American missionary Dr. Daniel Bliss as Syrian Protestant College, AUB ([www.aub.edu.lb](http://www.aub.edu.lb)) adheres closely to the American model for higher education while enjoying a world-class international reputation. The beautiful campus sits high on a hill overlooking the Mediterranean Sea within an historical part of Beirut and adjacent to the first-class AUB medical center. For 30 years, from 1975 to 2006, Lebanon was in and out of wars. The population was left with tremendous physical and emotional scars, and a high prevalence of hearing impairment and balance disorders. However, before 2015 only three formally educated audiologists were providing services to a population of five million. In 1998, Dr. Kim Smith Abouchacra moved to Lebanon from the U.S. to establish audiology services at AUB Medical Center. In 2009, she was joined by Solara Sinno, a Lebanese audiologist who joined the AUB audiology team and is currently pursuing a PhD in vestibular assessment.



The first cohort of audiology students in the Medical Audiology Sciences program at the American University of Beirut with Visiting Professor James W. Hall III, PhD, during an auditory electrophysiology class in January of 2016.

Together Kim and Solara began development of an audiology educational program in 2010, and in 2013 the program was approved by the New York State of Education Department and the Lebanese Ministry of Education. Approval and implementation of the audiology program would not have been possible without the efforts and support of Dean Iman Nuwayhid of the Faculty Health Sciences, Dean Mohamad El Sayegh of the Faculty of Medicine, and Dr. Georges Zaytoun, a well-respected otolaryngologist who completed his otology fellowship at Massachusetts Eye & Infirmary and who was then-chair of the Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery.

The Program of Medical Audiology Sciences (MAS) was justified at the bachelor level because it would assist in fulfilling an urgent need for qualified audiologists in Lebanon and the surrounding region. It now plays a pioneering role in expanding audiology in Lebanon and in improving the standard of care in the Middle East. Among prerequisite requirements are 10 hours of coursework in the natural sciences plus courses in Arabic and English. The curriculum includes typical basic science and clinical audiology courses, and over 300 hours of supervised direct patient care. The MAS program at AUB “prepares students for a successful career in audiology by providing them with a foundation in liberal arts education, coupled with a high-quality clinical education that is underpinned by the fundamental sciences of audiology and a rigorous scientific approach.” The long-term goal is to develop a U.S.-accredited graduate program at AUB.

Salus University’s Osborne College of Audiology recently introduced an international master’s of science (MSc) in Clinical Audiology program ([www.salus.edu/audiology](http://www.salus.edu/audiology)). Dr. Giri Sundar, director of Distance Education Programs in the Osborne College of Audiology, played the key role in designing the curriculum and assembling a top-notch faculty with expertise in all areas of audiology. The MSc in clinical audiology degree is a post-professional degree intended for working audiologists who have completed a four-year undergraduate degree in audiology (or its equivalent), and who have provided full-time clinical audiology services for no less than two years. The MSc program of study is both competency- and skills-based. Integrating an online and hands-on educational approach, the program is designed to develop in practicing audiologists outside of the U.S. competence in specialized areas of audiology.

To complete all requirements for the international MSc in clinical audiology program at Salus University, students are required to

1. Complete all the mandatory courses.
2. Complete three clinical skills training practicum.
3. Choose two fellowship programs in topics such as cochlear implants or vestibular sciences and disorders.

Each fellowship program is composed of didactic courses in the specialty area of study, two hands-on workshops, and 150 clinical hours under the supervision of a college-approved preceptor. The first cohort of students enrolled in the Salus University MSc in clinical audiology program consists mostly of audiologists practicing in the Middle East.

Efforts to educate the first generation of audiologists are underway in many countries. That dream is now a reality at AUB in Lebanon. Newly developed on-campus audiology educational programs, in combination with innovative options for formal post-bachelor’s degree education for practicing audiologists like the online MSc in audiology program at Salus University, are sure to improve hearing health care and quality of life for large numbers of children and adults worldwide. 🎧

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## References

Hall JW. (2015a) Thinking globally about audiology education. *Aud Today* 27(3):72–73.

Hall JW. (2015b) Expanding and enhancing audiology education globally. *Aud Today* 27(4):70–71.