

# 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

1996 - 2006

THE MIDDLE EAST CANCER CONSORTIUM

MELC



# MECC : addressing regional challenges of cancer

**MECC**



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# Prelude



**Michael O. Leavitt**  
Secretary,  
Dept. Health & Human Services



**Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D.**  
Director,  
National Institutes of Health



**John E. Niederhuber, M.D.**  
Director,  
National Cancer Institute



"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC) on the occasion of its 10th anniversary. The MECC is a leader in health diplomacy, bringing together clinicians, scientists, and health policy leaders to address the needs of the cancer community in the region. HHS has supported MECC since its inception and I look forward to its continued success."



"The Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC) is commended for its 10 years of achievement in public health in the region. The MECC model proves that such regional engagement leverages and strengthens individual and national scientific and clinical efforts. Such partnerships are increasingly important for the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the global research community."



"MECC is about the development of a new cadre of young scientists, & about collaborative research that ultimately leads to better outcomes for patients in the communities where they live. The MECC's Cancer Registry Project and its monograph published in 2006 are milestones for the region, providing detailed information on cancer's impact today & a sound statistical basis from which to chart future progress in cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment. With great appreciation for your important contributions. My congratulations."

## The Birth of MECC

The initiative of the establishment of MECC originated in the White House during the Presidency of William J. Clinton in 1995.



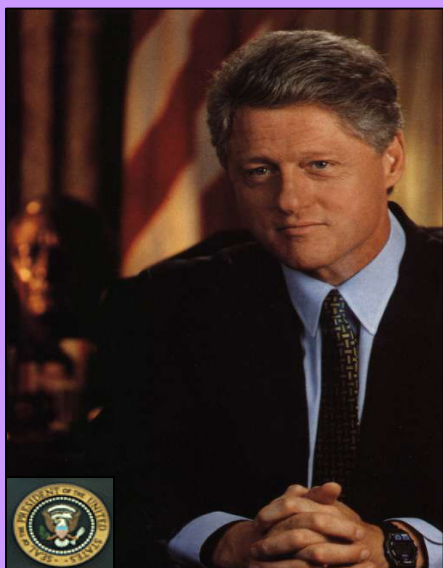
The timing :The peace initiative between the Israelis and the Palestinians was in progress.



The idea : combining the peace process with the effort of lowering the burden of cancer in the Middle East



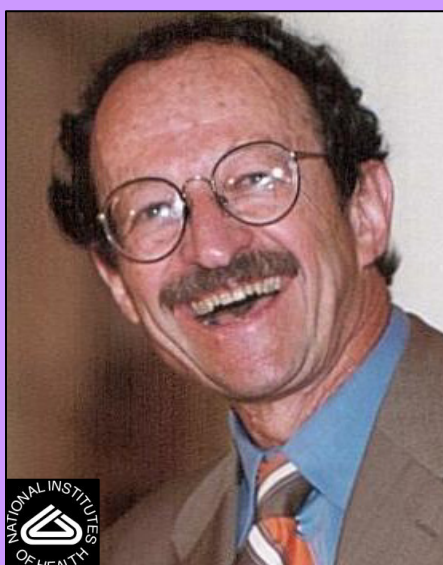
# The individuals who were involved in the creation of MECC



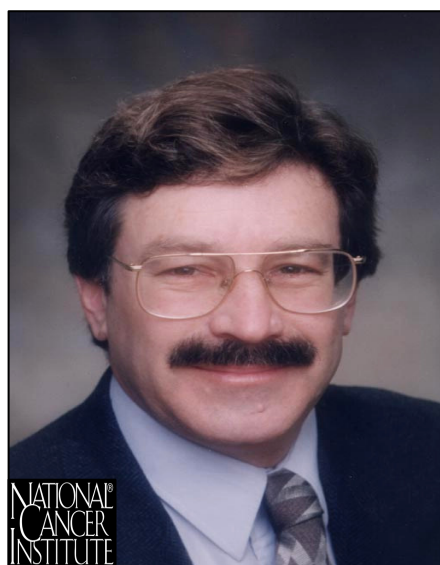
President W. J. Clinton



Secretary Donna E. Shalala,  
Dept. Health & Human Services



Dr. Harold Varmus  
Director, National Institutes of Health



Dr. Richard Klausner  
Director, National Cancer Institute

**MECC agreement signed on  
May 20, 1996  
In Geneva, Switzerland**

**The Signatories to the MECC Agreement :**



**Dr. Munzer Sherif**  
Palestinian Authority



**Dr. Donna Shalala**  
USA



**Mr. Manolis Christofides**  
Cyprus



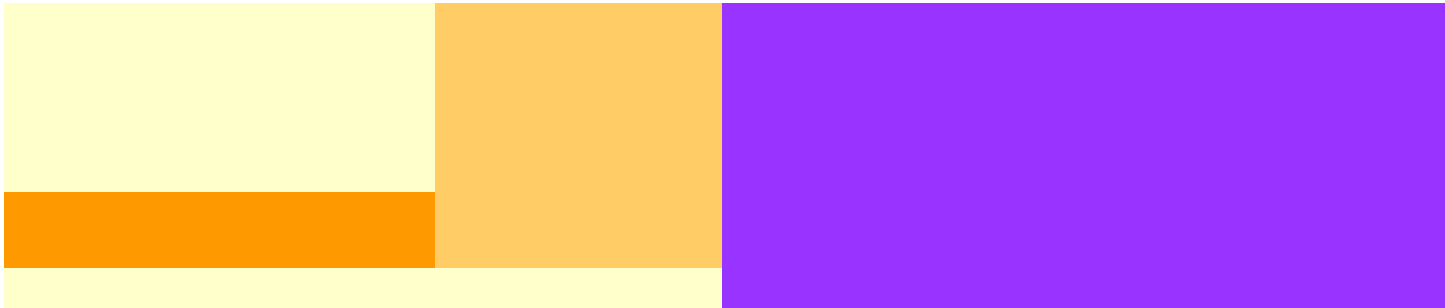
**Prof. Ismail Sallam**  
Egypt



**Dr. Maarouf Bataynea**  
Jordan



**Dr. Ephraim Sneh**  
Israel



# MECC's Structure

The committee is comprised of the Ministers of Health of all MECC countries and is chaired by the US Secretary of Health & Human Services. The committee is responsible for approving the annual budget, all new projects and the acceptance of new countries as member states. It usually convenes once a year, during the WHA in Geneva, Switzerland.

## Ministerial Steering Committee



The committee comprises of one representative from each MECC member, who is nominated by the respective Minister of Health. The committee is responsible for all the ongoing programs and projects. It convenes once a year in either in the Middle East or Europe. Its chairman is elected by the committee's members.

## Board of Governors



The PIs are appointed by their respective Ministers of Health and are in charge of the day today activities of the cancer registry in their jurisdiction. Once a year they report to the Cancer Registry Steering Committee.

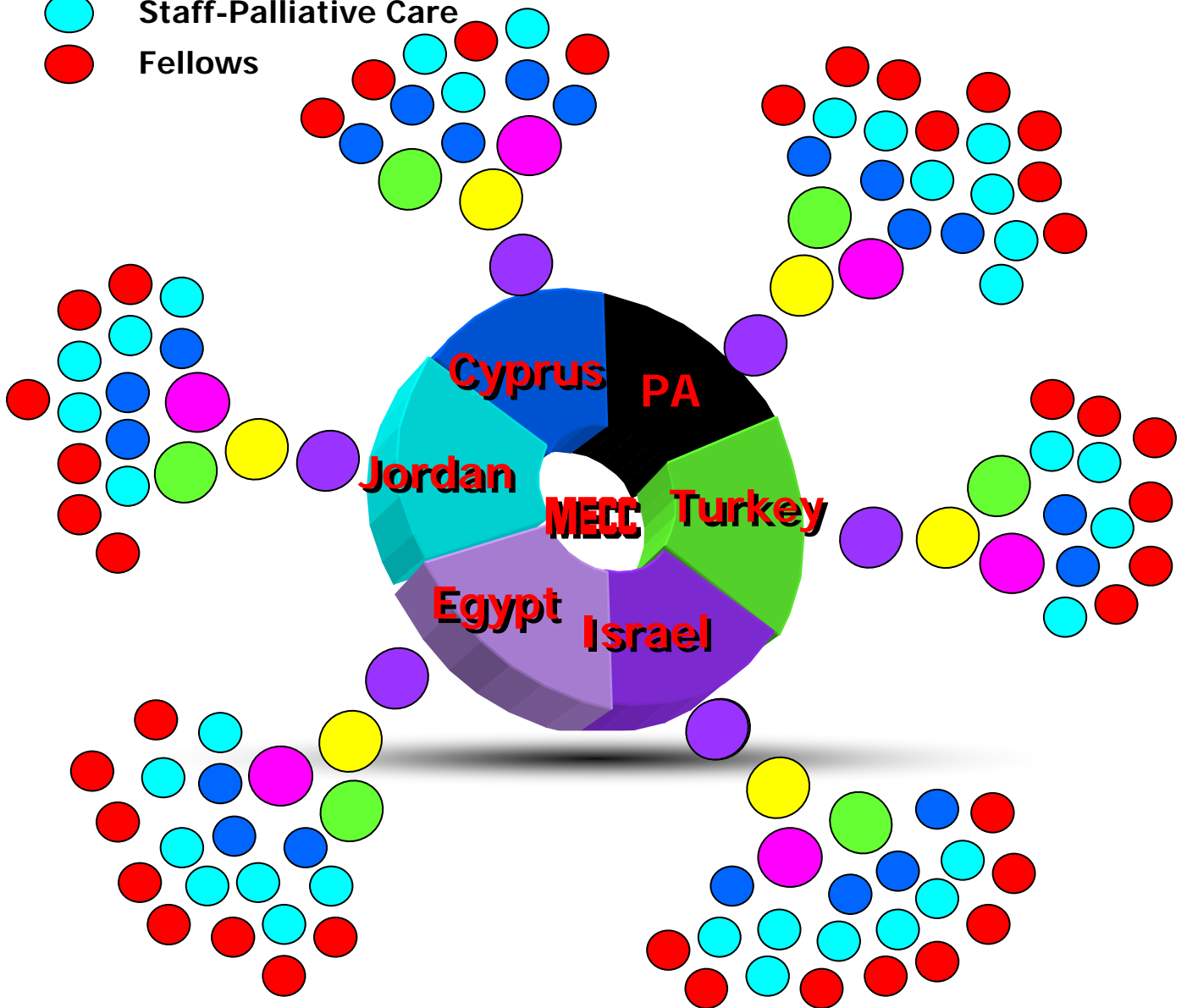
## Principal Investigators

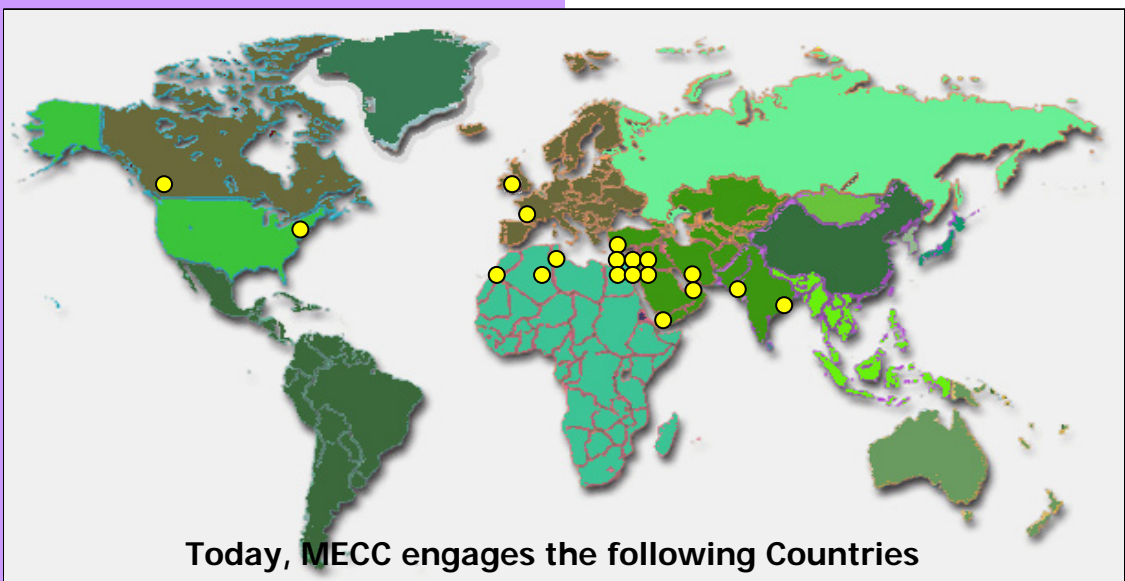
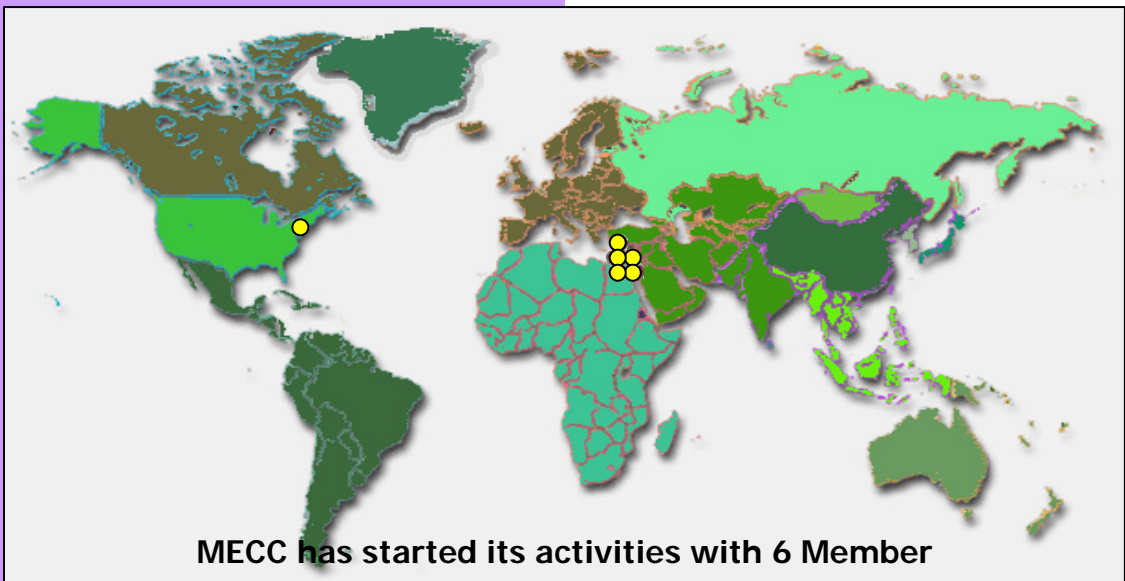
The NCI liaison person to MECC and the MECC Executive Director serve as ex-Officio members on all committees.



# The MECC Network

- Ministers
- BoG
- Cancer Registry Principal Investigators
- Palliative Care Principal Investigators
- Staff-Cancer Registry
- Staff-Palliative Care
- Fellows





# MECC's Accomplishments

## Regional Project No. 1 – Cancer Registries :

The project involves the collection of national incidence data through the use of the MECC Manual of Standards for Cancer Registration, and a special computer program – CanReg.  
The collected data are used for comparison studies both within the region and with those of the USA SEER project.

### A. Regional Cancer Registries



Izmir, Turkey



Nicosia, Cyprus



Tanta, Egypt



Amman, Jordan



Jerusalem, Israel



Gaza & West Bank,  
Palestinian Authority

### B. The Cancer Registry Steering Committee convened yearly



1998, Amman



2000, Larnaca



2004, Ankara



2005, Lyon

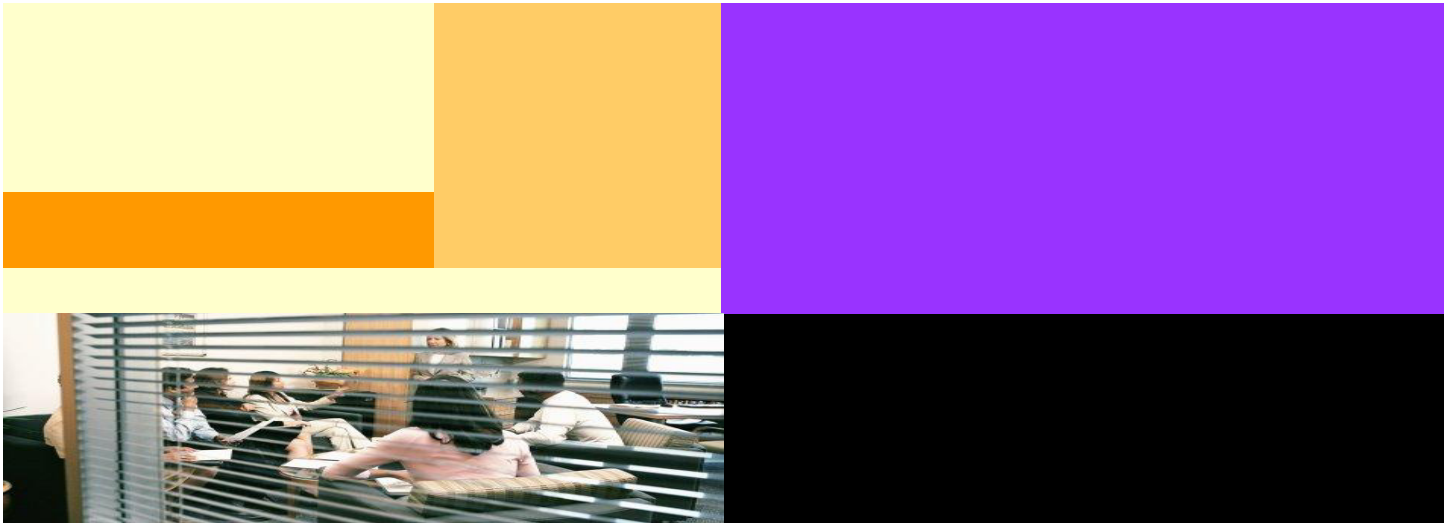
### C. Examples of training

I. Basic and advanced training in cancer registry.  
Prof. John Young, Emory Univ. GA. USA.



II. Training in Epidemiology & Bio-Statistics.  
Prof. Amal Ibrahim, NCI, Cairo, Egypt.





## D. Publications

- \* Cancer Registry in the Middle East.  
*Medical Journal of Islamic Academy of Science* 12:55-56, 1999
- \* Cancer Registration in the Middle East.  
*Epidemiology* 12:131-133, 2001
- \* Perspective for Cancer Epidemiology Research in the Middle East.  
*Gastrointestinal Oncology* 4:181-183, 2002
- \* The Middle East Cancer Consortium: A Model for a Regional Cooperation Program.  
*JDC-Brookdale Institute, Middle East Program*, 23-30, 2003
- \* A Comparison of Population-Based Cancer Incidence Rates in Israel and Jordan.  
*European Journal of Cancer Prevention* 12:359-365, 2003

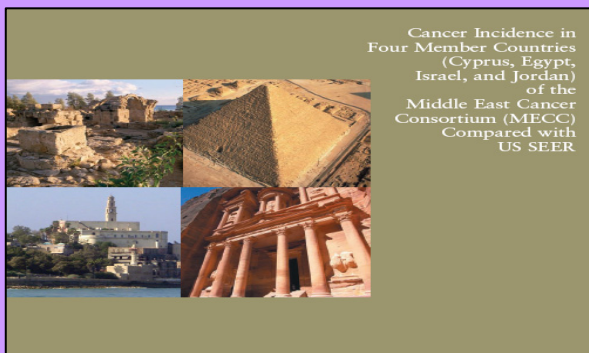
## E. Creation of guidelines :

The guide lines aims in assisting to build a standardized population – based cancer registration network in the Middle East, with quality control, and eventually to be able to coordinate MECC activities, to compare data, and to help make better public health decisions

(In English, Greek & Turkish)



## F. NCI – Cancer Registry Monograph, 2006



This project represents a decade of hard work and collaboration among scientists in the region and is a model for international scientific collaboration in troubled regions of the world.

### A few of the major findings are:

1. Liver cancer incidence rates in Egyptians were 5-7 times as high as those of the other MECC populations.
2. Egyptians and Israeli Jews had higher rates of non-Hodgkin Lymphoma.
3. Jordanians had the lowest incidence of cancer.

## Regional Project No. 2 – Small Grants / Fellowships :

**The Small Grants** Program of MECC has funded investigators representing the entire MECC membership for collaborative research projects. Over 40 such projects have been funded in basic science, clinical science, and epidemiology / population science. These grants have served to foster cross-border collaborations since this has been a requirement for funding. Applicants have come from academic institutions, hospitals, governmental health agencies.

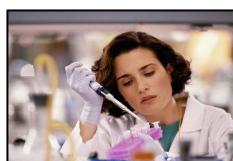
### Selection of MECC-sponsored research grants:

Establishment of DNA and Serum Banks for Jordanian Familial Cancer Patients and relatives.



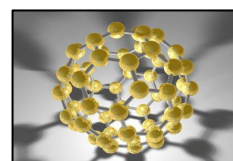
**Jordanian and Cypriot**

A Pilot Study to Investigate the Epidemiology of Non - Hodgkin's Lymphoma in Egypt and Jordan.



**Egyptian and Jordanian**

The Molecular Mechanism for the Rarity of Colorectal Cancer Among Palestinians as Compared to Israelis.



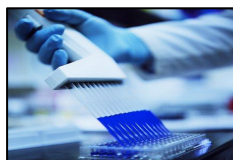
**Palestinian and Israeli**

The Impact of an Empowerment Model on Palestinian and Israeli Woman Coping with Breast Cancer.



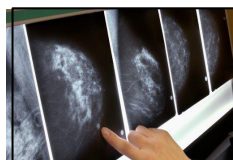
**Palestinian and Israeli**

Genetic Studies on Hereditary Nonpolyposis Colorectal Cancer In Families from Israel and Cyprus.



**Israeli and Cypriot**

Characterization of the Mutational Spectrum in BRCA Genes in Individuals at High Risk for Developing Breast & Ovarian Cancer.

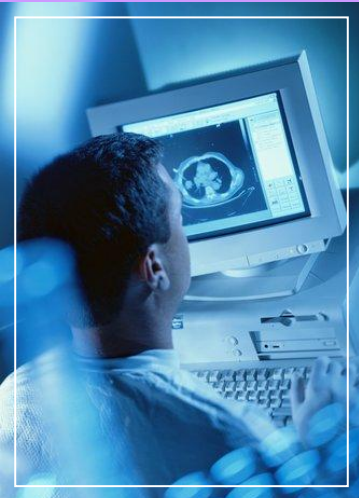


**Cypriot and Jordanian**

The results of such research projects are intended for publication in international, peer-reviewed journals and may also serve to stimulate additional research.



**The MECC Fellowship Program** is aimed at training and education of the next generation of cancer researchers. These fellowships provide an opportunity for exchanges of scientists within the region as well as training in the United States and Europe. In clinical science, fellowships have included radiation oncology, medical oncology, pathology, hematology, and pediatric oncology. Basic science fellowships and fellowships in epidemiology have also been supported by MECC. Fellowships range from a few months to a couple of years after which the fellowship recipients return to their home institutions bringing skills that upgrade clinical practice or enable research.





## Regional Project No. 3 – Palliative Care :

This project aims in solidifying guidelines of criteria and standards thus assisting in establishing a common base line for clinical practice of palliative care in MECC countries.

### A. Yearly meetings

- 1<sup>st</sup> Palliative Care Meeting, 2004
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Palliative Care Meeting for the Cancer Patient, 2005
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Palliative Care Meeting for Pediatric Oncology, 2006



### B. The Project relates to

Palliative Care at all life stages



### C. Promoting exchange programs

MECC delegation ( from all MECC members )  
at Calvary Hospital In New York, USA



# Collaborations with other International Organizations :



The Leading Partner  
Bethesda, MD. USA



Computer Program-  
CanReg  
Lyon, France



Cancer Registry  
Atlanta, GA. USA



Palliative Care  
New York, N.Y. USA



Training in Cancer  
Nursing and Malignant  
Lymphoma



Training in Imaging and  
Radiotherapy



Training and Education



International Fellowships



International Conferences



International Conferences



International Conferences



# Guiding Principles of MECC`s Activities :

*low profile*



*Working with different cultures*



*Tolerance*

*Collaboration*



*Respect*



# The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary



**Middle East Cancer Society meeting:  
A Pre-MECC event, Israel, 1995**  
Prof. Mohamed Nabil El-Balkainy, Egypt.  
President, Middle East Cancer Society.



**Middle East Cancer Society meeting:  
A Pre-MECC event, Israel, 1995**  
From Rt to Lt –  
Prof. John Young, Emory Univ., Atlanta, G.A.  
The initiator of Cancer Registry training in the Middle East.  
Prof. Michael Silbermann, Chief Scientist, Israel.  
Prof. Ayhan Cavdar, President, Turkish Academy of Sciences.



**Reception at the  
Egyptian Ambassador residence,  
Israel, 1995**  
From Rt to Lt –  
Dr. Ahmed Hablas, Egypt.  
Prof. Amal Sami Ibrahim, Egypt.  
Dr. Ernesto Kahan, Israel.  
Mrs. Nagwa Bassiuni,  
Ambassador Mohamed Bassiuni  
Prof. Aharon Poliack, Israel.



### **Acquaintance Visit in Gaza City, 1997**

From Rt to Lt –

**Dr. Fathi Arafat**, President, The Red Crescent.  
**Dr. Riyadh Za`anoun**, Minister of Health, Palestinian Authority.

**Dr. Richard Klausner**, Director, NCI, Bethesda.



### **Visit at the Nebo Mount, Following a site visit in Jordan, 1998**



### **Reception at the Department of State, Washington, 1998**

**Secretary Donna E. Shalala**, introduces  
**Dr. Harold Varmus**, Director of National Institutes of Health, to State Dept. staff.



**Visit to the  
Nasser Pediatric Hospital, Gaza, 1997**



**Ministerial Meeting, Geneva, 1998**  
From Rt to Lt  
**Prof. Wagida Anwar**, Egypt.  
**Prof. Ismail Sallam**, Minister of Health, Egypt.  
**Mr. Mustafa Kasem**, Jordan.



**First Cancer Registry Steering Committee,  
Jordan, 1998**  
From Rt to Lt  
**Dr. Micha Barchana**, Israel.  
**Dr. Michael Boyiadzis**, Cyprus.  
**Prof. Dincer Firat**, Turkey.  
**Prof. Laurence Freedman**, Chair.



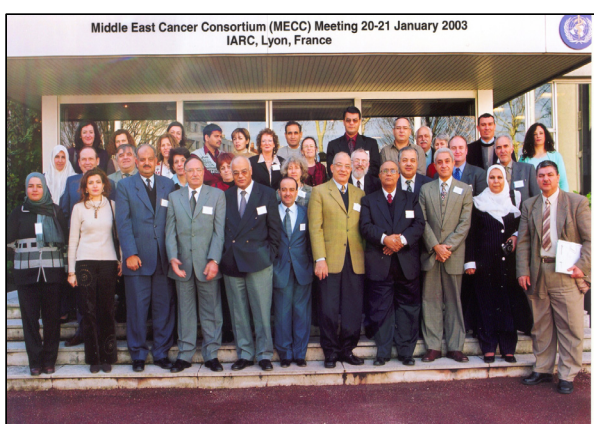
**Cancer Registry meeting, Jordan, 2000**  
Including participants from North Africa to the Persian Gulf.



**Ministerial meeting, Geneva, 2001**  
From Rt to Lt –  
**Prof. Michael Silberman**, MECC.  
**Secretary Tommy Thompson**, USA.  
**Dr. Richard Carmona**, Surgeon General, USA.



**Training Course in Cancer Registry,  
Cyprus, 2002**



**The Annual Cancer Registry Meeting,  
IARC, Lyon, 2003**



**The first Cancer Registry Meeting in  
Turkey, 2004**



**Workshop on Disease Prevention &  
Health Promotion in the Middle East,  
IARC, Lyon, 2004**

Sponsored by the USA Department of Health & Human  
Services.

**The Signature Ceremony  
Ankara, June 15, 2004**

From Rt to Lt  
**Prof. Michael Silbermann**, MECC.  
**Prof. Recep Akdag**, Minister of Health, Turkey.  
**Mr. Kamuran Ozden**, Turkey.  
**Dr. Joe Harford**, USA.  
**Mrs. Sevim Aydin**, Turkey.



# *Turkey Joins MECC*







**Ministerial Steering Committee,  
Geneva, 2004**



**Meeting of the Middle East  
School of Oncology  
Cyprus, 2005**



**Cancer Registry Training Course  
Cyprus, 2005**  
Advanced course for MECC registrars.



**Mr. Naveh, Israel**

**Dr. Masri, P.A.**



**Mr. Gavrielides, Cyprus**

**Prof. Akdag, Turkey**



**Ministerial Steering  
Committee Meeting  
Geneva, Switzerland, 2005**



**Secretary Leavitt, USA**



**Prof. Tag El-Din , Egypt**



**Eng. Darwazeh, Jordan**

## The Board of Governors

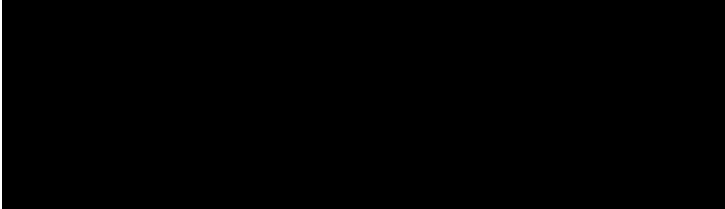
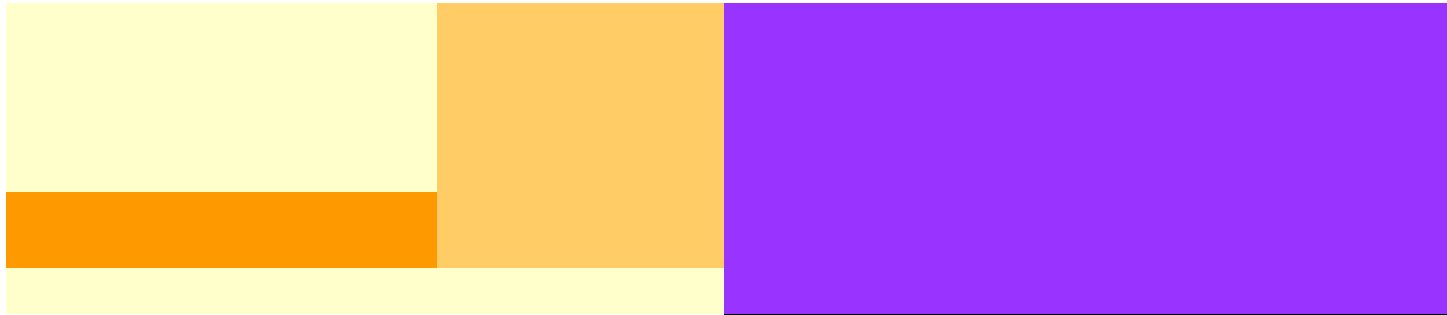


## The Cancer Registry Principal Investigators



## The Palliative Care Principal Investigators





**A Visit of the American Cancer Society in the Middle East, Jordan, 2005**

From Rt to Lt

**Dr. J. Seffrin**, CEO, ACS.

**Dr. H. Eyre**, Chief Medical Officer, ACS.

**Mr. N. Grey**, VP, International Affaires, ACS.

**Dr. O. Shafey**, Manager, Int. Cancer Control Research.



**Calvary Hospital exploration team in the Middle East, Jordan and Israel, 2005**

Visit to the Italian Hospital in Haifa.



**Middle Eastern Cancer Registry Meeting IARC, Lyon, 2005**

Involving participants from the Magreb to the Persian Gulf.





P.A.

P.A.

Egypt

Jordan

Israel



**The First MECC Delegation  
Visiting Calvary Hospital, USA, 2005**

President Clinton Joins  
MECC Delegation at Calvary Hospital.



Jordan - Israeli Friendship.



**Workshop on Palliative Care for the  
Cancer Patient, Cyprus, 2005**



**Active Participants in the  
Palliative Care meeting, Cyprus, 2005**

From Rt to Lt

**Prof. Aziza Shad**, Georgetown Univ., USA.

**Mr. Jock Whittlesey**, US Embassy, Amman.

**Mrs. Joan Jones**, US Embassy, Tel Aviv.

**Prof. Aviad Haramati**, Georgetown Univ., USA.



**Director's Gold Star Ceremony,  
Bethesda, 2005**

From Rt to Lt

**Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach**, Former NCI Director

**Dr. Joe Harford**, NCI, USA

Dr. Harford receives the award in recognition for MECC  
and other international activities.



**The First International Workshop for  
Palestinian Oncology Nurses  
East Jerusalem, 2006**  
Including participants from the West Bank and the Gaza  
Strip.



**Opening Ceremony of the  
Cancer Week of Turkey, 2006**  
In the presence of the  
Minister of Health – Prof. Dr. Recep Akdag.



**MECC International Workshop on  
Epidemiology & Bio-Statistics  
with in the framework of the Cancer  
Week of Turkey, 2006**



**MECC International Palliative Care Workshop,  
Dedicated to Communication Issues in  
Pediatric Oncology  
Cyprus, 2006**



**The MECC –Turkey  
International Conference  
on Pediatric Oncology, Turkey, 2006**

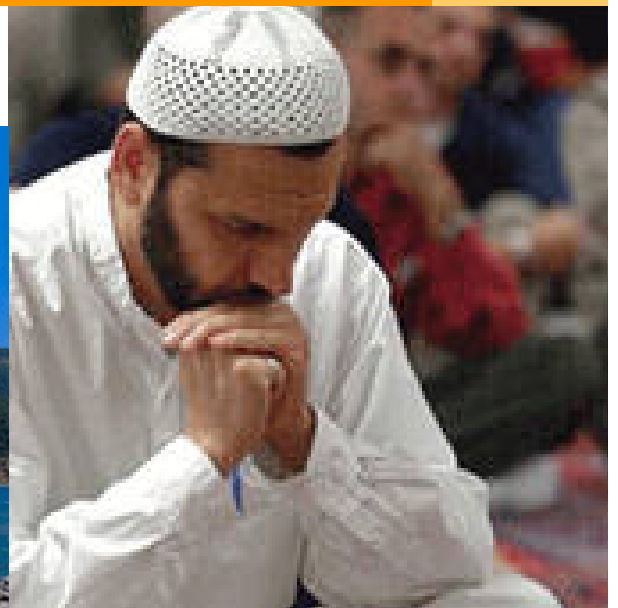
The gathering focused on novel approaches in the treatment of childhood cancers.



**Prof. Leora Kuttner, Canada,**  
Demonstrates modern psychological modalities  
for the treatment of Pediatric patients.



We are all one    כולנו אחד    Είμαστε όλοι ένα  
Hepimiz Biriz    كلنا واحد    כולנו אחד



كلنا واحد    Είμαστε όλοι ένα    כולנו אחד    Hepimiz Biriz    We are all one  
כולנו אחד    Hepimiz Biriz    We are all one    كلنا واحد    Είμαστε όλοι ένα



We are all one    כולנו אחד    Είμαστε όλοι ένα  
Hepimiz Biriz    كلنا واحد    כולנו אחד

# Ministers from MECC Countries Involved in the Organization's Activities



Mr. Manolis Christofides  
Cyprus



Dr. Riyad El-Zaanoun  
P.A.



Mr. Tommy Thompson  
USA



Dr. Ephraim Sneh  
Israel



Eng. Said Darwazah  
Jordan



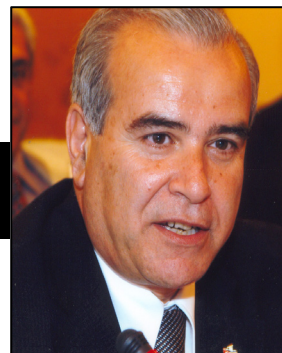
Prof. Ismail Sallam  
Egypt



Mr. Andreas Gavrielides  
Cyprus



Prof. Recep Akdag  
Turkey



Prof. Walid Ma`ani  
Jordan



Dr. Donna Shalala  
USA



Rabbi Nissim Dahan  
Israel



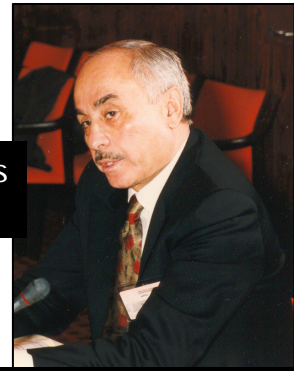
Dr. Anan Masri  
P.A.



Mr. Michael Leavitt  
USA



Mr. Firixos Savvides  
Cyprus



Dr. Ashraf Al-Kurdi  
Jordan



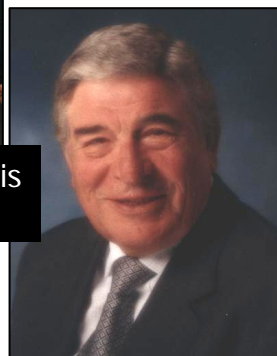
Dr. Faleh Al Nasser  
Jordan



Mr. Yehoshua Matza  
Israel



Mr. Christos Solomis  
Cyprus

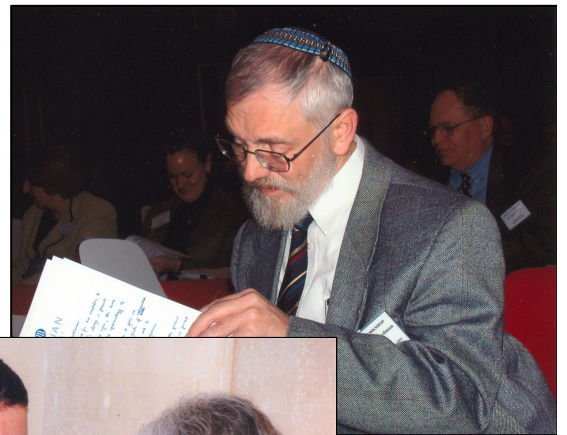


Dr. Maarouf Bataynea  
Jordan

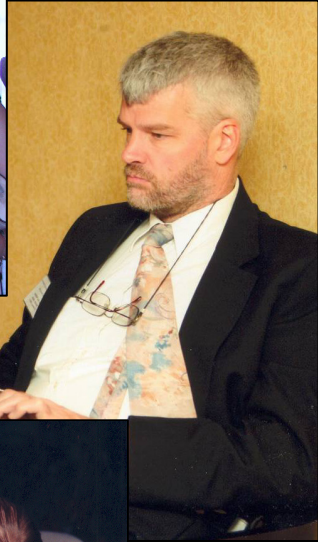


Mr. Danny Naveh  
Israel

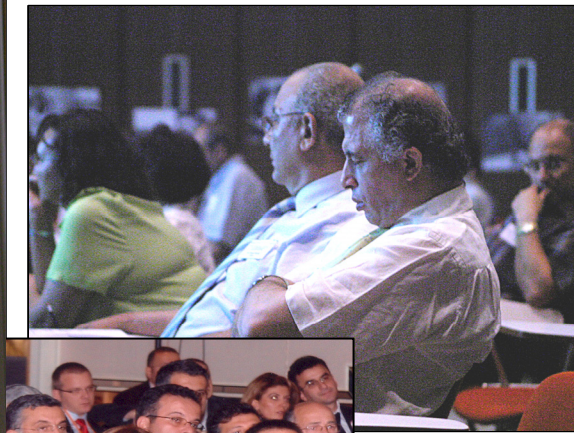
# Highlights



# Highlights



# Highlights



# Highlights





**Dr. Joe Harford**  
**Director, Office of International Affairs**  
**National Cancer Institute, NIH, DHHS**



## Epilogue

Since the signing of the historic agreement forming the Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC) in 1996, the United States has had two Presidents (one from each political party), three Secretaries of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), two Directors of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and three Directors of the National Cancer Institute (NCI). The NCI was instrumental in the establishment of MECC, and then DHHS Secretary Donna Shalala formally witnessed the signing ceremony in Geneva. Former DHHS Secretary Tommy Thompson and current Secretary Michael Leavitt have continued strong U.S. support and leadership within MECC by chairing its Ministerial Steering Committee. NCI Director, Dr. John Niederhuber now serves as a member of the MECC Board of Governors as did his two predecessors, Dr. Richard Klausner and Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach. I mention these facts to make one simple point: our commitment to MECC and to the peace and well-being of the region transcends political parties and is independent of the comings and goings of individuals.

Since its inception ten years ago, MECC has provided a shining example of how geopolitical differences can be put aside to strive together toward the common goal of reducing and ultimately eliminating suffering and death due to cancer. MECC has worked to foster research collaborations through its small grants program. Another major activity of MECC has been the establishment and support for population-based cancer registries in the region. A significant milestone occurred this past year with the publication of the NCI monograph on cancer incidence in four MECC countries with comparison to the data from NCI's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End-Results (SEER) program. In addition to its work in cancer registry, MECC activities encompass issues that range from prevention to end-of-life care with many workshops and symposia having occurred across this cancer continuum. In particular, MECC has taken on capacity building in palliative care and symptom management and has already supported several training activities related to this important topic.

On the occasion of MECC's tenth anniversary, it is tempting to look back with some pride on what has been accomplished. I would challenge us instead to look ahead and relish the possibilities of all that might be accomplished by MECC and by similar activities wherein the good of all the people of the region is allowed to proceed despite the complex political issues that swirl around us. To the many individuals who have contributed to MECC over the past decade, I wish to give my personal thanks as well as that of NCI. Well done! To those who have not yet had opportunity to contribute, our future is all ahead of us. Come join in this noble endeavor.





**Prof. Michael Silberman  
Executive Director**



MECC was established in 1996 about three years following the Oslo accords. As MECC began to work in the region, it became apparent that cooperation begins and ends with people. It is the people who eventually determine the scope and nature of such cooperation. Dialogue between Arab and Israeli health professionals as well as between Cypriots and Turks continued via MECC despite historic difficulties. MECC has shown that mutual respect, goodwill and understanding can lead to true dialogue, which in turn can serve as the basis for collaboration.

MECC started its regional activity in establishing a regional cancer registry network. During the first decade, the cancer registry model relied on descriptive epidemiology techniques. The data from the individual registries were primarily utilized by policymakers within their own jurisdiction. In the coming years, it is our goal to have the data from the cancer registries form a foundation for collaborative research in the region.

Our experience with the cancer registration project made clear that sustaining such collaborative activities is a significant challenge. It also became clear that sustainable cancer registries require an ongoing training program and quality control and assurance. Centralized training and quality control have been among MECC's contributions to the individual cancer registries.

It would not have been possible to build the cancer registry network without the substantial assistance from the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD and Emory University, Atlanta GA. The Ministries of Health of the MECC members have gradually taken over a larger part of the burden for the registry infrastructure, which contributes substantially to the sustainability of these surveillance centers. More recently MECC started another regional project around palliative care for the cancer patient and is drawing upon NCI and Calvary Hospital in New York for training on this important topic.

The common battle against cancer that defines MECC has proven that common ground can be found for the process of mediation between societies, even those engaged a struggle extending over a century. Health professionals can serve as "ambassadors" to promote collaborations. Any such endeavor however must be based on mutual respect and goodwill, and patience and perseverance are also essential. As we progress into MECC's second decade, we will need to keep in mind all that we have learned over it's first.

[www.mecc.cancer.gov](http://www.mecc.cancer.gov)

## Contacts:

### MECC :

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Fax : +972-4-8346338  
mecc@actcom.co.il

### NCI :

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Director, Office of International Affairs, National Cancer Institute  
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Bethesda, MD, 20829-7301, USA  
Tel : +1-301-4964761  
Fax : +1-301-4966344  
harfordj@nih.gov

## Cancer Registries offices:

### Palestinian Authority (West Bank) :

Dr. Abdel Razzaq Salhab  
Director West Bank Cancer Registry  
Beit Jala Hospital, Beth Lechem  
Palestinian Authority  
Tel : + 970-2-277639  
Fax : + 970-2-277639  
salhbpna@yahoo.com

### Cyprus :

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