



THE LEBANESE CENTER FOR PALLIATIVE CARE – BALSAM

المركز اللبناني للعناية
التلطيفية – بلسم

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Founded in 2010, Balsam stands as a beacon of compassion and support for patients requiring palliative care and their families. With a steadfast dedication to preserving dignity and ensuring access to essential care, this NGO has become a cornerstone in the provision of palliative services. Offering all services free of charge, Balsam's mission remains focusing on the holistic wellbeing and support for both patients and their families.

Over the past four years, Balsam has faced major challenges, chief among them being the global COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the financial turmoil. Despite these obstacles, Balsam's commitment to its mission remained unwavering. The pandemic brought unprecedented strains on healthcare systems worldwide, disrupting access to care and resources. However, Balsam's resilience shone through as it adapted swiftly to the new circumstances, ensuring continuity of services while prioritizing the safety of patients and staff.

The resilience of Balsam in the face of adversity can be attributed to the collective efforts of generous donors and dedicated staff. Despite the financial hardships, the unwavering support of donors enabled Balsam to continue providing vital services to those in need. Moreover, the commitment and dedication of the staff proved indispensable, as they worked tirelessly to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and financial instability. Through the generosity of donors and the dedication of its staff, Balsam not only weathered the storms of the past four years but emerged stronger, reaffirming its position as a beacon of hope and compassion in the field of palliative care.

Respectfully,

Salah Zeineldine, MD, FACP
President of the Board and Executive Director
April 2nd, 2023



**MISSION
VISION**

OUR MISSION



The Lebanese Center for Palliative Care - Balsam is a non-governmental organization that aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of life of patients with serious illness through patient care, advocacy, capacity building and research.

OUR VISION

To integrate palliative care into the Lebanese health system to ensure that it is available and accessible to all who need it.





OUR TEAM

OUR TEAM

Despite all the extraordinary challenges over the past few years, work at Balsam continued unabated. Our team is committed to helping patients and families achieve the best quality of life regardless of the challenges. They demonstrated commitment, dedication and resilience as they continued to provide excellent care to our patients despite road closures, street violence, the pandemic, the financial crisis, and shortages of fuel and gas.



Medical Director - Rana Yamout

After joining Balsam in May 2018 as physician, Rana has now stepped up to fill the position of Balsam's Medical Director in order to continue to ensure the best quality of patient care. Dr. Yamout has been on faculty at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) since June 2018. She is the director of the Palliative and Supportive Care Program at AUBMC and founder and president of the Lebanese Palliative Care Society under the Lebanese Order of Physicians. Rana is an anesthesiologist and palliative care specialist.

OUR TEAM



Operations Manager – Roula Doughan

Roula has once again assumed her role as Balsam Operation Manager after being away in Dubai for one year. Roula always has a natural way to get things done while putting a smile on everyone's face. The team is thrilled to have Roula back, and Roula is so happy to be back where she belongs – her home away from home.



Palliative Care Physician - Aline Zakhem

After spending 5 years as Balsam's Medical Director and leading the team through many hardships and challenges, Aline decided to step down from this position in order to spend more time with her new baby boy. Aline is a Infectious Disease specialist at AUBMC. Aline continues in her role as a Balsam physician



Palliative Care Physician - Karim Farah

Karim is a pulmonary and critical care physician. He provides care at multiple hospitals including AUBMC where he is the proud recipient of the AUB Gold Humanism Award.



Palliative Care Physician - Joe Khoury

Joe is a family physician and palliative care specialist. He moved to France a few years ago where he leads a palliative care team. Despite his move, he remains a huge source of support for members of the team engaging them in training opportunities internationally.

OUR TEAM



Clinical Nurse Specialist - Janane Hanna

Janane is a Clinical Nurse Specialist in both pain management and palliative care. She has been leading the Pain Consultation Service at AUBMC since its establishment. This year she has played a more prominent role at the national level. She contributed to the development of the recommendations for the Supportive and Palliative Care Chapter in the National Cancer Plan and is now serving on the Advisory Implementation Committee. Janane was a coauthor for the first introductory course for nurses given through Order of Nurses and serving as a founding board member of the Palliative Care Nursing Association.



Clinical Nurse Specialist - Rebecca El Asmar

Rebecca is a Clinical Nurse Specialist who has been providing care to patients with breast cancer at AUBMC. She provides clinical and technical support to the Balsam team.



Palliative Care Nurse - Alia Tabsh

Alia brings extensive experience and palliative care nursing and nursing management to her role at Balsam. This year she proudly marked her ten year employment at Balsam, calling it one of the most beautiful relationships she has had. Alia's long list of patients serves as a testimony of the wonderful relationships she has created with all those she has helped along the years at Balsam.



Palliative Care Nurse - Chadia Fayad

Chadia has been providing compassionate nursing care to Balsam patients since 2015. In the past year, she has been using her experience and skills to offer training and advocacy in Lebanon and abroad.

OUR TEAM



Palliative Care Nurse - Batoul Haidar

Batoul initially joined Balsam as a part time nurse before she decided to dedicate herself to working full time in palliative care. In addition to her work with our patients, she has been representing Balsam internationally as a teacher and trainer.



Palliative Care Nurse - Abeer Fleifel

Abeer joined the Balsam team in February 2023 as a part-time nurse for adult and pediatric patients. Throughout her career, Abeer has gained work experience in assessment and management of the physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and social needs of patients. Abeer believes that joining Balsam will further add to her knowledge and experience.



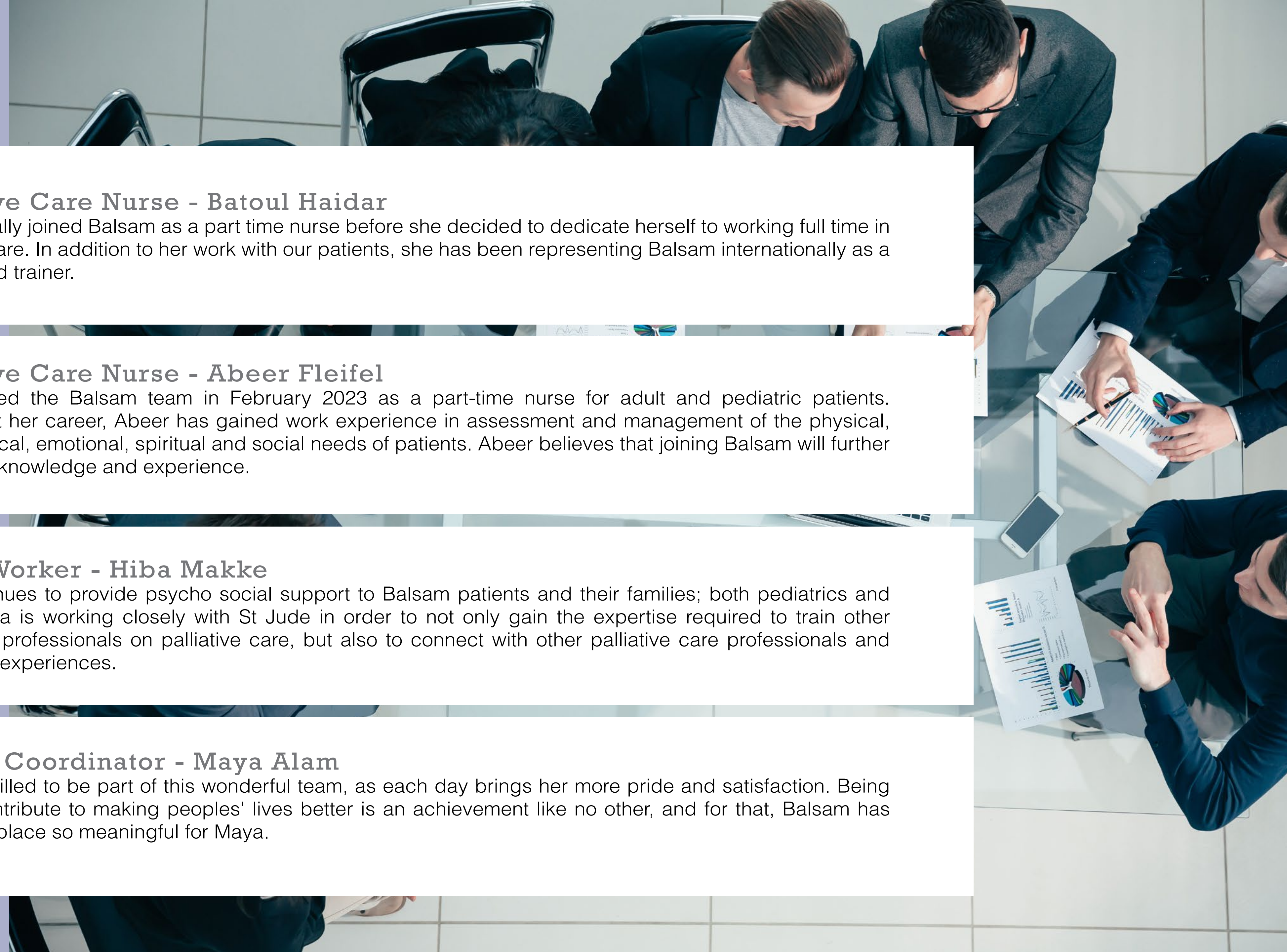
Social Worker - Hiba Makke

Hiba continues to provide psycho social support to Balsam patients and their families; both pediatrics and adults. Hiba is working closely with St Jude in order to not only gain the expertise required to train other healthcare professionals on palliative care, but also to connect with other palliative care professionals and share their experiences.



Quality Coordinator - Maya Alam

Maya is thrilled to be part of this wonderful team, as each day brings her more pride and satisfaction. Being able to contribute to making peoples' lives better is an achievement like no other, and for that, Balsam has become a place so meaningful for Maya.





**WHAT
WE DO**

WHAT WE DO

Balsam supports patients with serious illnesses, and their families, in order to prevent and relieve suffering, and to help patients maintain the best possible quality of life despite their illness. We help patients make informed decisions about their medical care, in accordance with their own values and beliefs. Our holistic and interdisciplinary approach includes medical services as well as psychological, social, practical and spiritual support within the family and home environment.

We accept self-referrals as well as referrals from local physicians. Once a patient is evaluated and accepted into our care, a specially-tailored care plan is developed by our interdisciplinary team. Balsam care usually includes regular home visits by one of our palliative care nurses, who assesses and manages the patient's symptoms and supports the family, under the supervision of our team of physicians. The frequency of nurse visits depends on the needs of the patients, and may vary during the course of the illness. We are accessible and available to our patients around the clock. Our clinical pharmacist and dietician offer support to the nurses and physicians on the team, to provide optimal care. Our social worker provides additional support to patients and families based on their psychosocial needs. If a patient passes away, the Balsam team continues to support the family through the bereavement period, for at least one year.

Although our capacity to provide patient visits remains limited to the Greater Beirut area, Balsam has from the outset been supporting patients and physicians outside Beirut through telecommunication. Over the years we have learned that this form of help has been important and valuable for patients and their families. In 2015, we formalized this service as "Distance Support". Our Distance Support patients and caregivers can seek telephone advice from a Balsam nurse around the clock, and they find it a valuable source of medical expertise and relief in moments of need.

Referrals are prioritized according to acuity. Approximately half of referrals are admitted within 2 days and 75 % are seen within 6 days of referral.





**WHO WE
HELP AND
HOW**

WHO WE HELP AND HOW

Our patients fall into three different categories, according to the kind of services we provide them.

Regular Support: Regular support patients generally have advanced illnesses that are progressive and expected to require increasing levels of care. They live within the Greater Beirut area and are accessible for frequent home visits. They include our "high needs" and "stabilized" patients. High-needs patients receive our full package of services as they have active symptoms requiring management, or significant psychosocial needs. Nurses visit these patients at least once a week, and conduct emergency visits when needed. Our stabilized patients are those whose medical or psychosocial needs are minimal. Most of them are patients who had high needs at one point but who were managed and stabilized under our care. They require fewer interventions and do not need weekly visits. Stabilized patients may deteriorate and develop high needs as their illness progresses.

Distance Support: Distance support patients generally live outside the Greater Beirut area. The care is tailored to the needs of the family and their accessibility to the Balsam team. The service may include a one-time home visit by a Balsam physician or nurse to set a care plan wherever feasible. Patients are then managed through telecommunication support, by guiding and advising the patient and / or family by phone. At present Balsam is not able to offer Distance Support patients emergency medical visits.

One-Time Visits: For chronically-ill patients who are expected to remain stable, our intervention might include only one visit. The visit includes patient assessment, management of medications, assessment of equipment needs, and education of the family. It can be an important source of guidance and support for family caregivers. Additional visits may be scheduled, depending on the needs of the patient and the availability of Balsam staff.

Pediatric Palliative Care: Balsam provides regular support, distance support and one-time visits to pediatric patients suffering from life limiting illnesses. The needs of children are unique and often quite different from those of adults receiving palliative care. The care is family-centered, it helps with communication and coordination of care thus improving the well-being of not the patient only but the entire family





CAPACITY BUILDING

CAPACITY BUILDING



تتشرف نقابة الممرضات والممرضين في لبنان
بدعوتكم لحضور الحلقة الثانية ضمن سلسلة
المحاضرات الافتراضية حول العناية التلطيفية تحت عنوان:

“Pain Management”

Session 2

1
CNE

Speakers:
Janane Hanna RN,MSN,AOCNS
Clinical Nurse Specialist – Pain & Palliative Care-
AUBMC
Balsam-The Lebanese Center for Palliative Care
Ammar Zahreddine MSN, RN
Clinical Nurse Specialist- Malignant Hematology &
Transplant
AUBMC

[Register here](#)

Wednesday
January 25

3 pm

zoom

As part of our efforts to spread palliative care awareness and knowledge, we aim to create training opportunities in palliative care for health care professionals throughout Lebanon so that they may become providers of palliative care in their own communities. At Balsam, we strongly believe in continuing education for our healthcare providers, and in staying up-to-date in our practice. Balsam members are actively participating in conferences, training and other activities that aim to promote palliative care and offer education to healthcare professionals. Below is a selection of the training activities offered by members of the Balsam team in Lebanon and abroad in 2023.

January 2023

Balsam’s clinical nurse specialist Janane Hanna co-directed "Introductory Palliative Care Education for Nurses across Lebanon". This initiative led by Order of Nurses was the first course given to nurses about palliative care across Lebanon; a series of 6 sessions, one each month. Balsam members Dr. Rana Yamout and Ms. Hiba Makki, in addition to Ms. Janane Hanna, presented in this course about various topics pertinent to palliative care.

CAPACITY BUILDING



May 2023

Three Balsam team members presented at the International Meeting of the Palliative Care Association for Morocco. Dr Rana Yamout, Dr Joe Khoury and Chadia Fayad talked about home based palliative care, sharing information on medical management as well as practical management of patients and their families.



CAPACITY BUILDING

July 2023

Balsam (Lebanon), CHPH (France) and BVGH (USA) joined forces to improve access to palliative care and contribute in building capacity on the African continent; as part of the first trans-African virtual palliative care course. The course aimed to improve access to palliative care by capacity building in the African region. The course spanned over 11 individual sessions distributed over several weeks, each session one hour long, followed by extra time for Q&A with the faculty. Also in July, Janane Hanna presented to Balamand BSN students the topic 'Key Considerations when Establishing Palliative Care Home Services'.

2023 Palliative Care Digital Training

August 22 - November 3, 2023

Join us for an 11-session digital lecture series focused on palliative care and tailored to meet the needs of medical providers on the African continent. Topics covered will include communication skills, pain management, psychological support, self-care, and more.

Lectures will take place at 5:30 pm
GMT/6:30 pm WAT/7:30 pm
CAT/8:30 pm EAT. Each lecture will
be approximately one hour followed
by 30 minutes of Q&A.

Click Here
to Register



Centre Hospitalier Public
d'HAUTEVILLE



Please email Teddy Olberding (tolberding@bvgh.org) and
Micaella Jorge (mjorge@bvgh.org) with any questions.



Salzburg OMI Seminar Palliative Care (ELNEC)



September 2023

Batoul Haidar, attended the End-Of-Life Nursing Education Consortium (ELNEC) that took place at the Open Medical Institute in Salzburg, Austria. At the end of the program, she presented a project that she will execute back home at Balsam. Learners from across the globe were excited to hear about Balsam's work in Lebanon they were happy to connect with Batoul and look forward to meet more Balsam team members in the future.

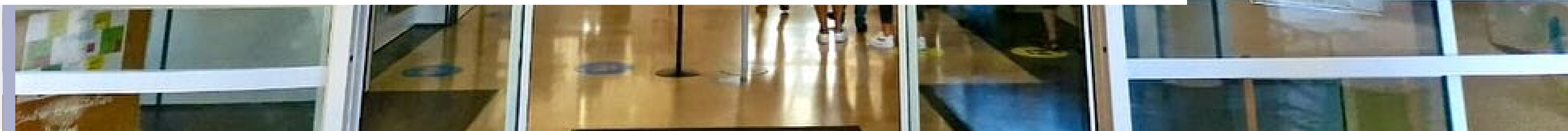
Dr Joe Khoury shared his knowledge on the subject of Communicating Bad News in the field of oncology. This presentation took place at the Institut Curie at Saint Cloud; in collaboration with renowned specialists in the field of medicine, semantics and psychology. Joe also contributed to the End of Life Care Pediatrics (EPEC) course in Salzburg which brought together leaders in the field from various countries.



December 2023

Alia Tabsh joined an online training titled: Palliative Care at Home; Subcutaneous route.

Dr Yamout and Alia collaborated with the french palliative care center of Hauteville along with other global palliative care experts to deliver the first trans African palliative care online course.





ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



At Balsam, we aim to increase awareness about the philosophy and practice of palliative care as an alternative approach to illness, death and dying.

ADVOCACY & OUTREACH



April 2023

A group of palliative care nurses joined efforts and established the Palliative Care Nursing Association, a professional association dedicated to foster quality palliative care nursing under the support of the Order of Nurses in Lebanon . We are proud that a member of our team, Janane Hanna, is one of the founding members. The aim of the association is to enhance the delivery of quality palliative care nursing and create a platform for networking for nurses. The association is committed to fostering collaborations with palliative care stakeholders and institutions, to make palliative care accessible to all who need it in Lebanon.

May 2023

Balsam members were invited as palliative care experts in Lebanon to contribute to the local adaptation of the EAPC task force on LGBT+ Inclusive Palliative and End of Life Care recommendations. Janane Hanna, Rana Yamout and Roula Doughan worked with Claude Chidiac, who is representing Lebanon through his work at the Lebanese Medical Association for Sexuality at the EAPC task force. This led to the development of culturally and linguistically congruent recommendations for healthcare professionals, health and social care organizations and policy makers in Lebanon and the wider region.

September 2023

September is pain awareness month. This year, the World Health Organization hosted three webinars to share country experiences and discuss the policy landscape for bringing about safe access to medical morphine. Balsam and Lebanon were represented by Janane Hanna, who talked about safe access to morphine in Lebanon.

What can be done to improve safe access to medical morphine? Lessons from countries

WHO
Webinar I

12 September 2023
Coordinated Universal Time 0830 to 1000

 Click to
register

September is Pain Awareness Month!

In June 2023, WHO published a report *Left behind in pain* [\[link\]](#), which describes the extent and causes of global variations in access to morphine for medical use. In this webinar, leading experts will reflect on their endeavours to transform clinical services and policy landscape to ensure safe access to morphine and other strong opioids. These include how to overcome cultural barriers in China, service barriers across islands in the Philippines, local production of oral liquid morphine in East Africa, safeguarding access during economic crisis in Lebanon, and recalibrate policy in Australia to ensure safe access. The expert panel will exchange their views on ways for overcoming the long-standing challenges in bringing safe access to people in need globally.

Expert panel

Rumalie (Mae) Corvera

Palliative Medicine Specialist, Asian Cancer Institute - Asian Hospital and Medical Centre
President and CEO, Ruth Foundation for Palliative and Hospice Care, Philippines
President, National Hospice and Palliative Care Council of the Philippines

Janane Hanna

Clinical nurse specialist, Balsam-the Lebanese Center for Palliative Care, American
University of Beirut Medical Centre, Lebanon

Emmanuel Luyirika

Executive Director, the African Palliative Care Association, Uganda

Suzanne Nielsen

Professor and Deputy Director, Monash Addiction Research Centre, Monash University,
Australia

Xiaohong Ning

Director and Associate Professor, Center for Palliative Care Medicine
Peking Union Medical College Hospital, China





October 2023

- Dr Rana Yamout was invited on LBCI Morning Talk to discuss palliative care and how it can benefit patients.
- On the occasion of the World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, Roula Doughan presented Balsam in the National Palliative Care Conference held at AUBMC. On that day, the Lebanese Palliative Care Society was launched and a roundtable discussion entitled “Different Spiritual and Religious Considerations at End-of-Life”, featuring various religious figures and their related perspectives was held. By fostering a shared understanding and promoting collaboration, the conference empowered healthcare professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to enhance the quality of palliative care, particularly concerning the spiritual dimensions of end-of-life experiences.
- Founder and director of Sawa Palliative Care, Dr Nazem Bassil, along with operation manager Mr Assad Haddad and nurse Najibe Khalil met with the Balsam team in order to learn more about Balsam workflow and best practices. Sawa is a newly established NGO that provides palliative care at home to terminally ill patients by offering them medical care as well as emotional, psychological, social and spiritual support.

CancerCom attending the National Cancer Plan meeting

At the Ministry of Public Health



In the last quarter of the year,

Dr Rana Yamout and Roula Doughan took part in the preparatory and coordination meetings organized by the National Cancer Plan Implementation Committee at the Ministry of Public Health. The series of meetings gathered several local NGOs involved in raising awareness and contributing to the fight against cancer in our community.



November 2023

Janane Hanna was invited to give a talk about Balsam and palliative care to nursing students at Balamand University

December 2023

Janane Hanna was one of the presenters in the workshop 'Palliative Care and End of Life in Europe and other Countries' given to nursing students held at Rene l'Ostivent in France.



RESEARCH

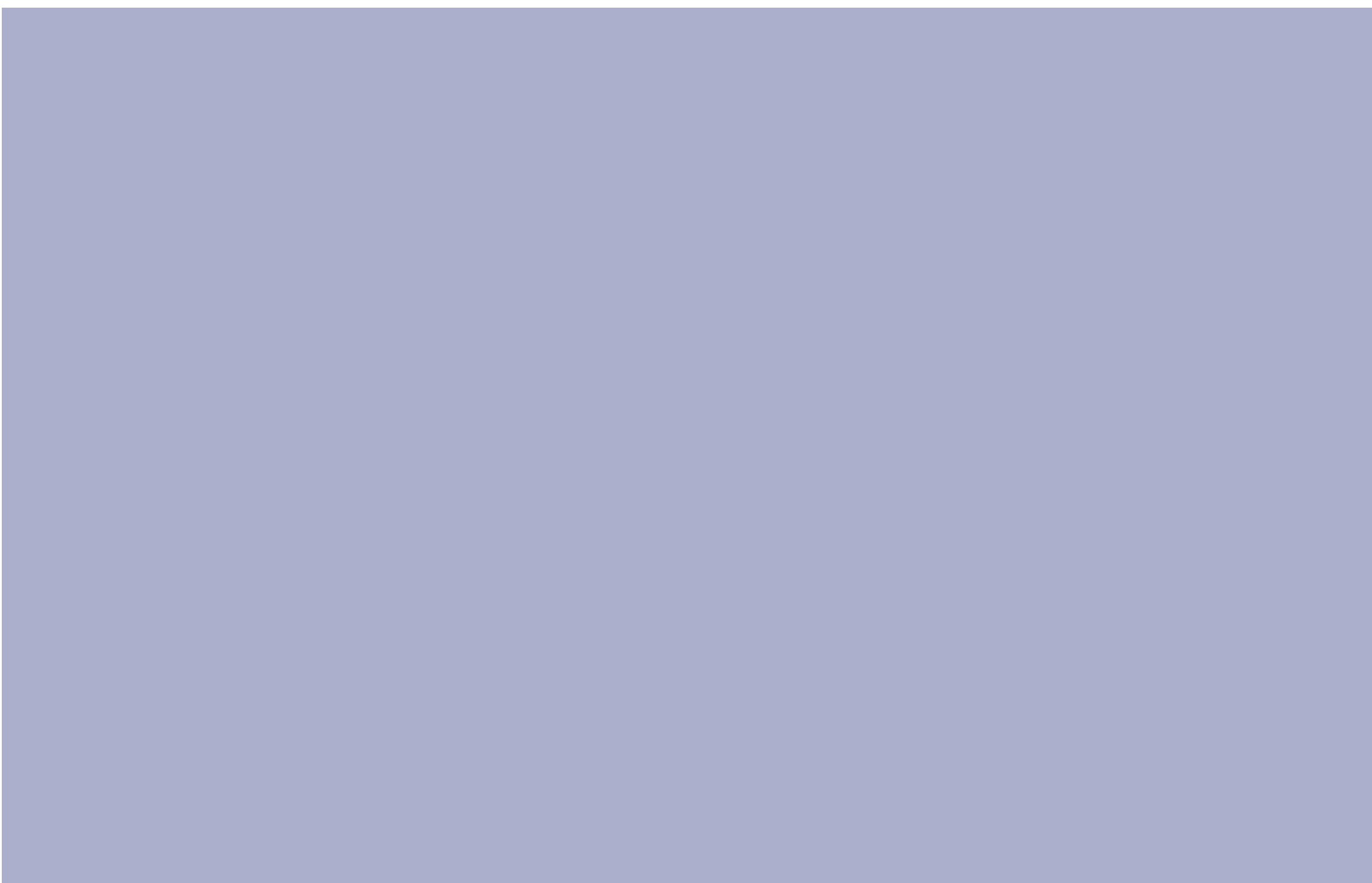
RESEARCH

Research about palliative care is continuously evolving and providers in this field are constantly contributing to the current knowledge base. Dr Rana Yamout and Dr Hibah Osman are conducting a study regarding current practices in spiritual assessment and care provision by health providers working in Lebanon.

Drs Yamout and Osman wrote a chapter about Palliative Care in the Arab World in Al Shamsi et al. book about Cancer, published in 2022. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the status of palliative care in our region.

We are currently collecting data about bereavement program in order to study some key elements relevant to the outcome of this program. Results will be published soon and made available to public.





■ SUSTAINABILITY

■ SUSTAINABILITY



Like most organizations operating in Lebanon, Balsam has faced an unprecedented series of challenges over the past 5 years. Lebanon's dramatic economic and financial meltdown was joined by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and on top of that came the devastating 4 August 2020 Beirut port explosion. All of these impacted heavily on Balsam's efforts to sustain its work. We had limited access to existing funds and holding large fundraising events did not feel feasible or appropriate. For the first time since our establishment, we decided to launch an online fundraising drive in March 2023. The outpouring of support from families of patients and individuals worldwide was truly touching and inspiring. Through the power of the internet, we were able to reach a vast audience, transcending geographical boundaries and bringing together people who believe in the value of the service Balsam provides and are committed to our sustainability.

■ SUSTAINABILITY



On June 6, 2022 Balsam and the Children Cancer Center of Lebanon (CCCL) joined forces in a collaboration to improve the quality of life for children. The benefits of this partnership come with the importance of palliative care that supports the patient and family by following treatment plans from the comfort of their home, which reduces unnecessary hospital visits living with cancer. Balsam has taken care of 18 CCCL patients. Through this partnership, we have been able to help patients receiving cancer care at CCCL spend more time in the comfort of their own homes and out of the hospital. We have been able to demonstrate positive outcomes including improved quality of life and enhanced communication within the family and with their medical teams. Also, hospital admissions have dropped and feedback from parents' satisfaction surveys have been extremely positive to date.

SUSTAINABILITY



The American Lebanese Syrian Associated Charities (ALSAC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1957 as the fundraising and awareness organization for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. As part of its mission, ALSAC provides support to nonprofits involved in caring for children with cancer around the world. Balsam joined the St. Jude Global Alliance in 2023 and has been receiving valuable support and coaching from the experienced team at ALSAC. In addition to regular check ins and mentorship meetings, Roula Doughan has had the privilege of attending online courses on strategic planning and fundraising.

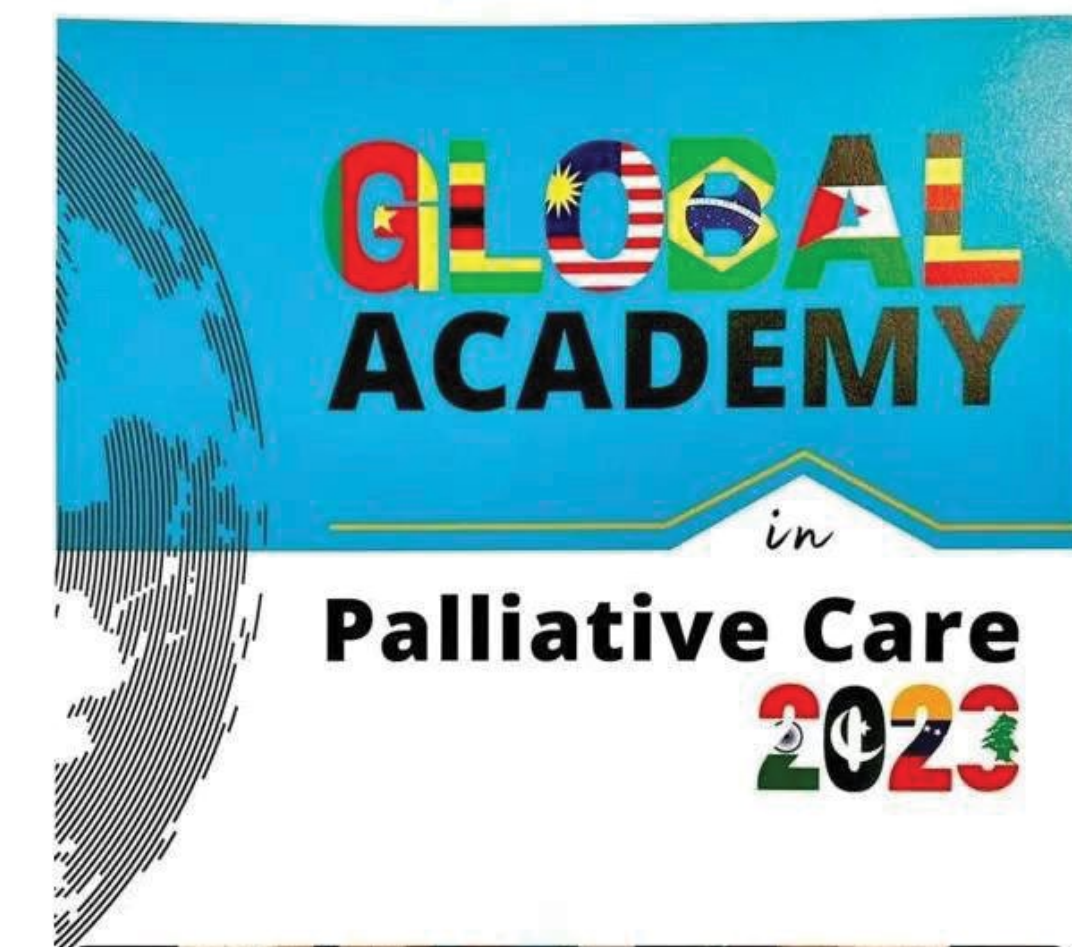
Dr. Rana Yamout and Hiba Makke attended the Education in Palliative and End-of-Life Care (EPEC Pediatrics train-the-trainer course) in Memphis, Tennessee in September 2023 as part of the St. Jude Global Academy in Palliative Care.

Janane Hanna attended St Jude Global Alliance convening in Memphis, USA. All partners of St Jude invited for convening to share, build and generate knowledge together. This event included a large number of networking activities to allow different partners of the global alliance network to be present.

Once a year, St Jude partners are invited to Memphis to attend a convening with the aim of sharing, building and generating knowledge together. Janane Hanna joint the St Jude Global Health Alliance convening in December of 2023 where she had a chance to connect with and learn from partners from around the world.



September, 10-16, 2023
Memphis, TN



■ FUNDRAISING

■ FUNDRAISING



We are committed to providing the best quality palliative care to our patients regardless of their ability to pay. The generosity and support of our donors makes this possible. Our donations, no matter how small have sustained us and inspired us to continue this important work.

Bank

Beneficiary Bank: Banque BEMO SAL
Beirut – Lebanon
SWIFT: EUMOLBBE
Account Number: 8900291176
IBAN: LB78 0093 0000 0035 0092 43661
Currency Code : USD

Beneficiary Bank: Banque AUDI SAL
Beirut, Lebanon Bliss Branch
SWIFT: AUDBLBBX
Account Number: 00080510-0008
IBAN: LB58 0056 0000 0000 0008 0510 0008
Currency Code : USD

Online

Support online by following the below link:

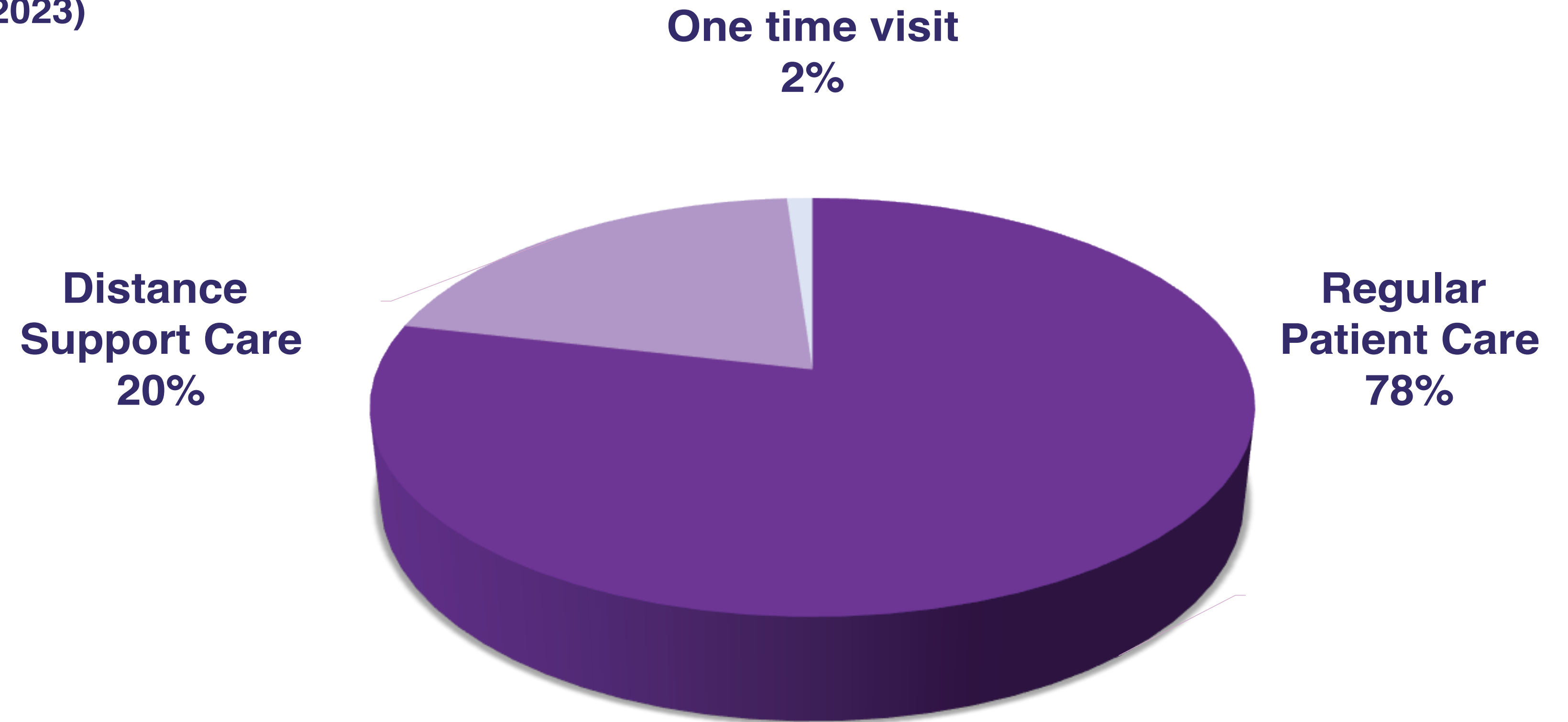
<https://fundahope.com/fundraisers/palliative-care-despite-difficulties>



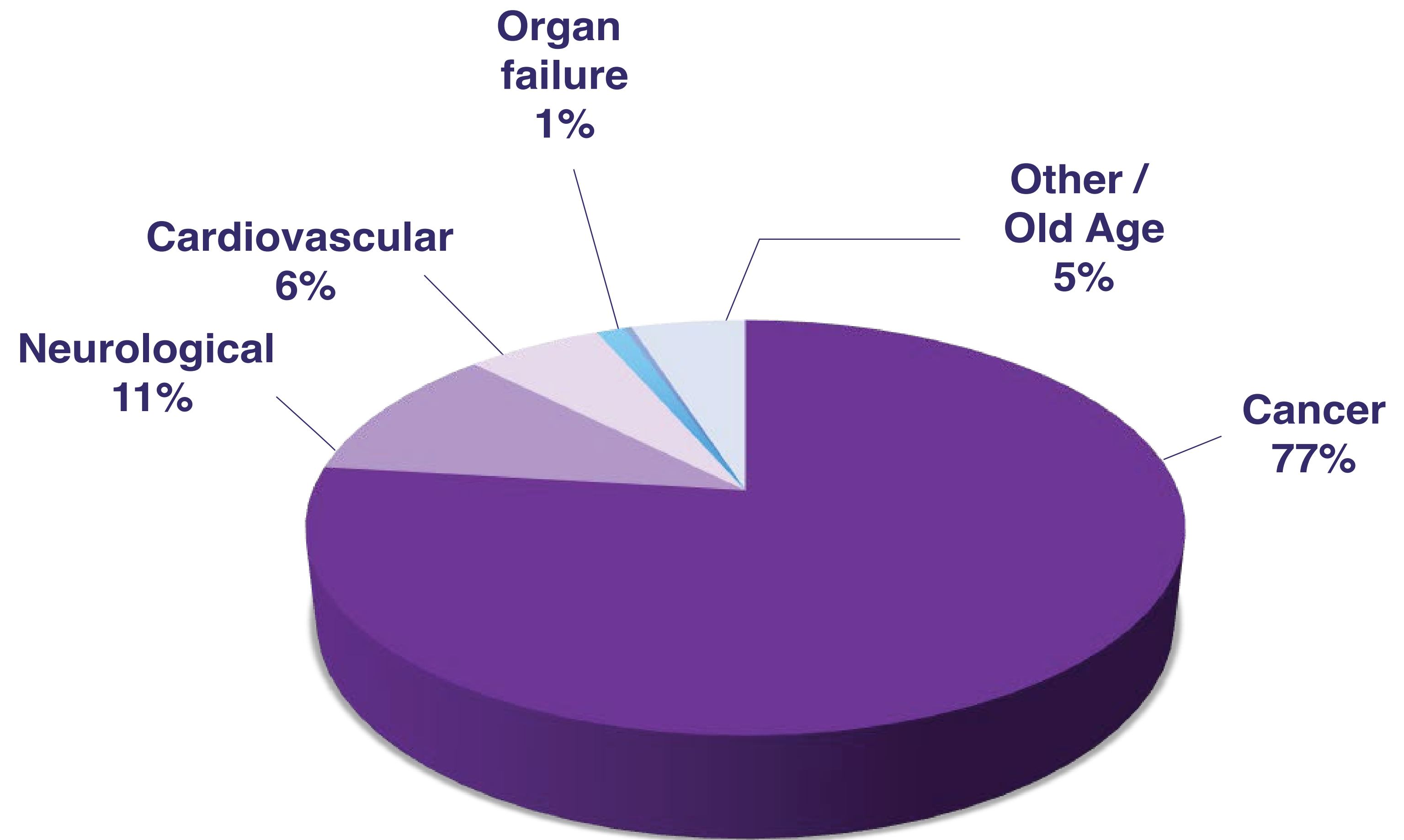


FACTS & FIGURES

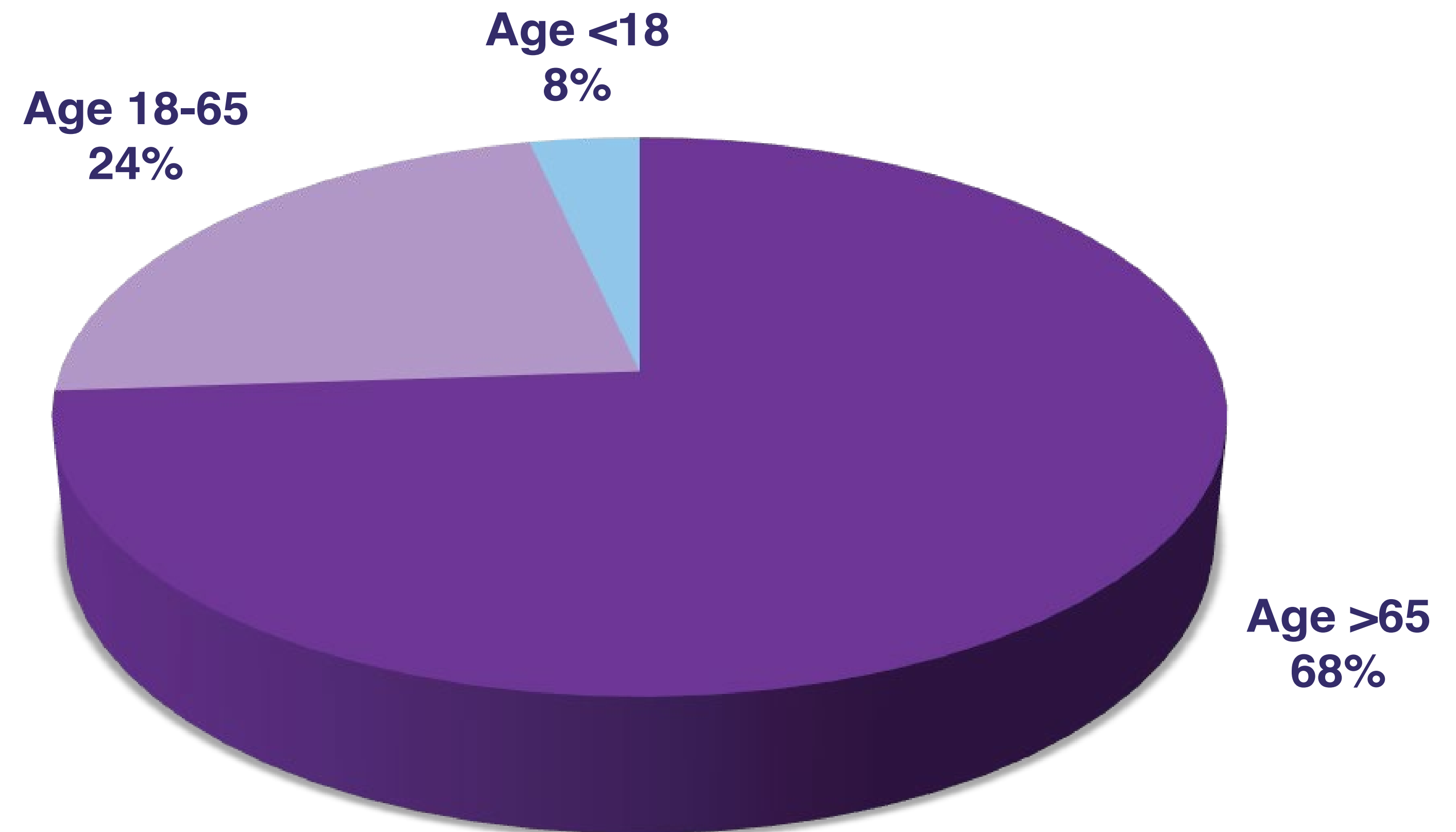
**Type of service received
(2023)**



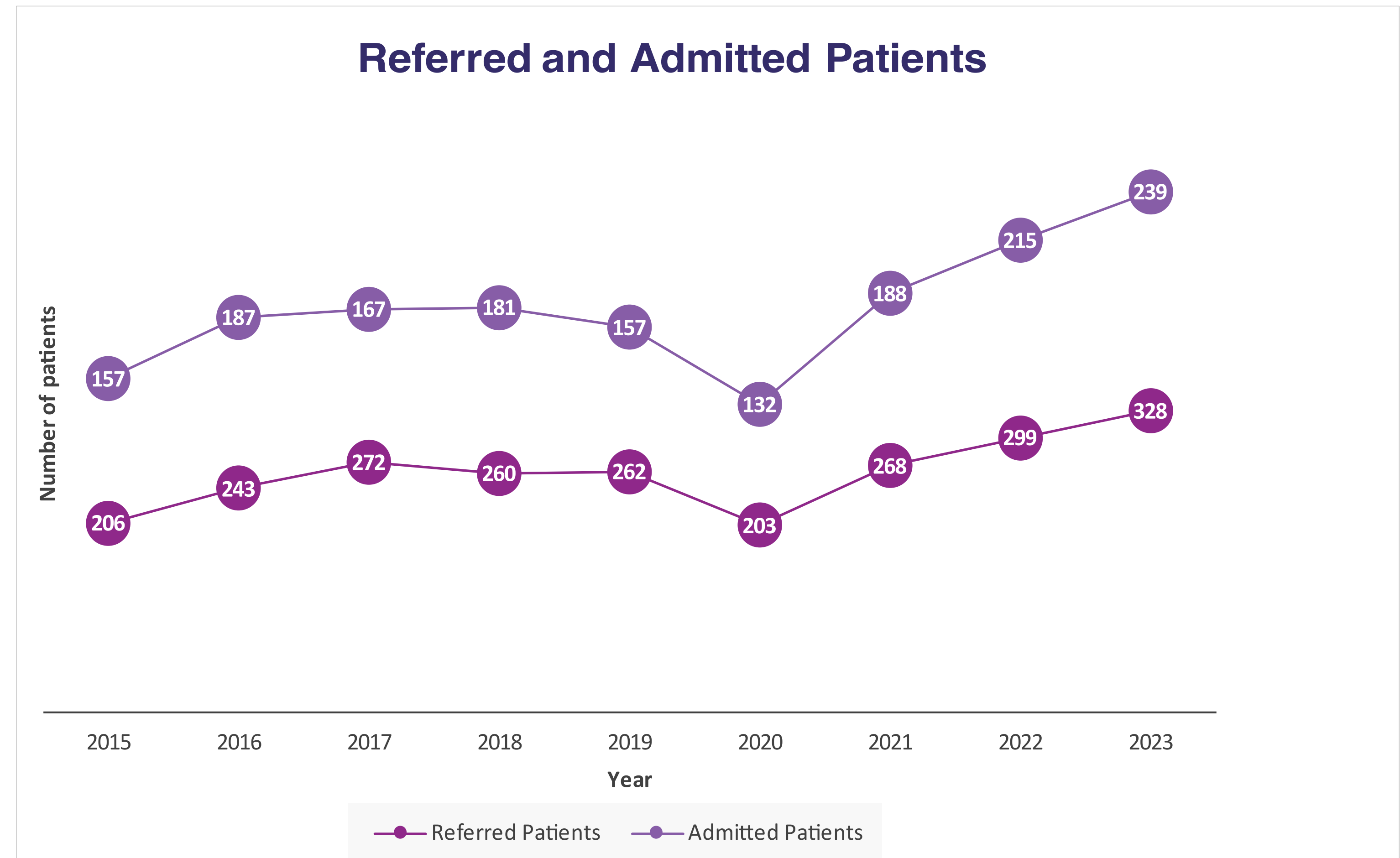
Patient Diagnosis (2023)



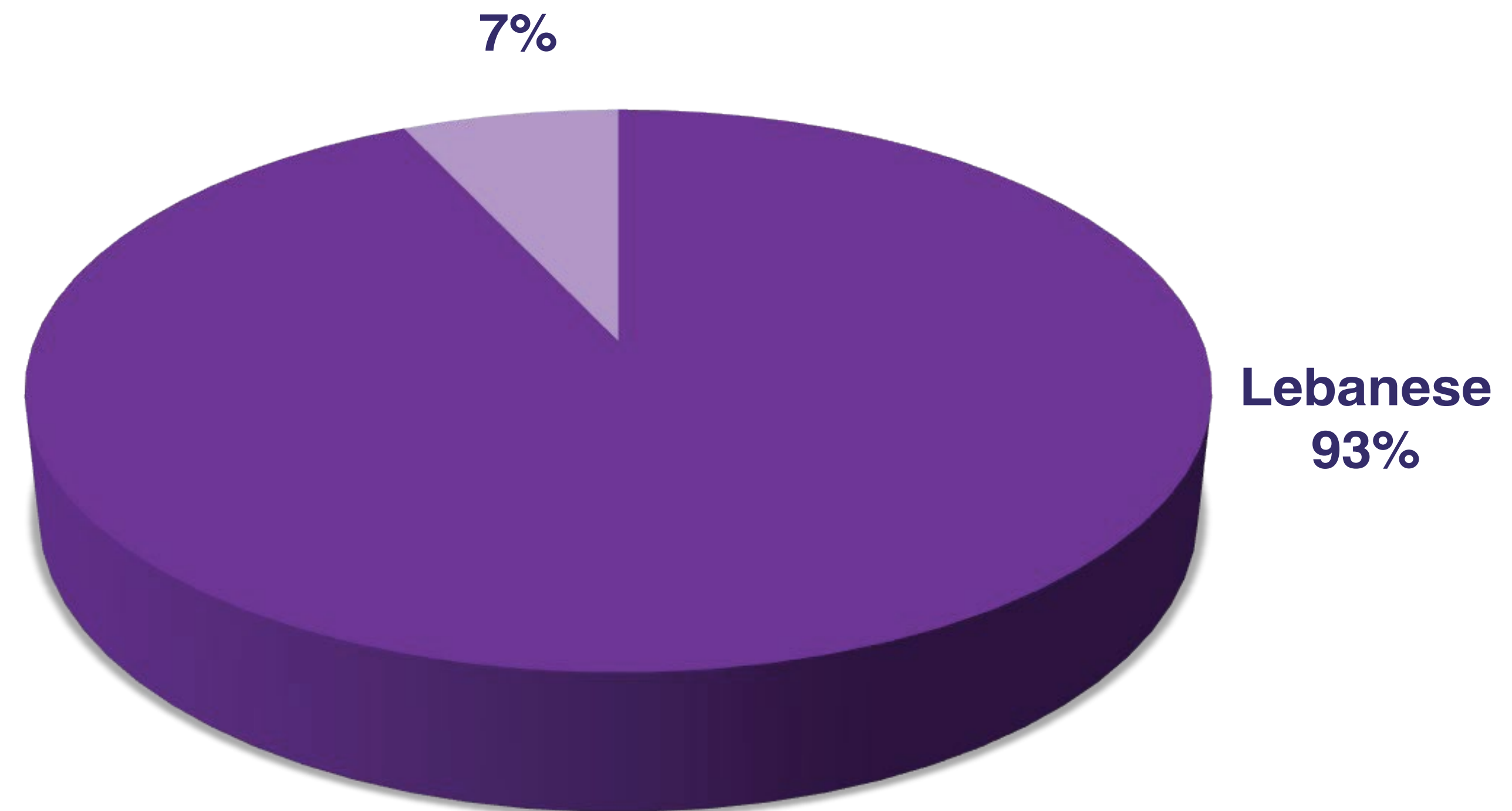
Age (2023)



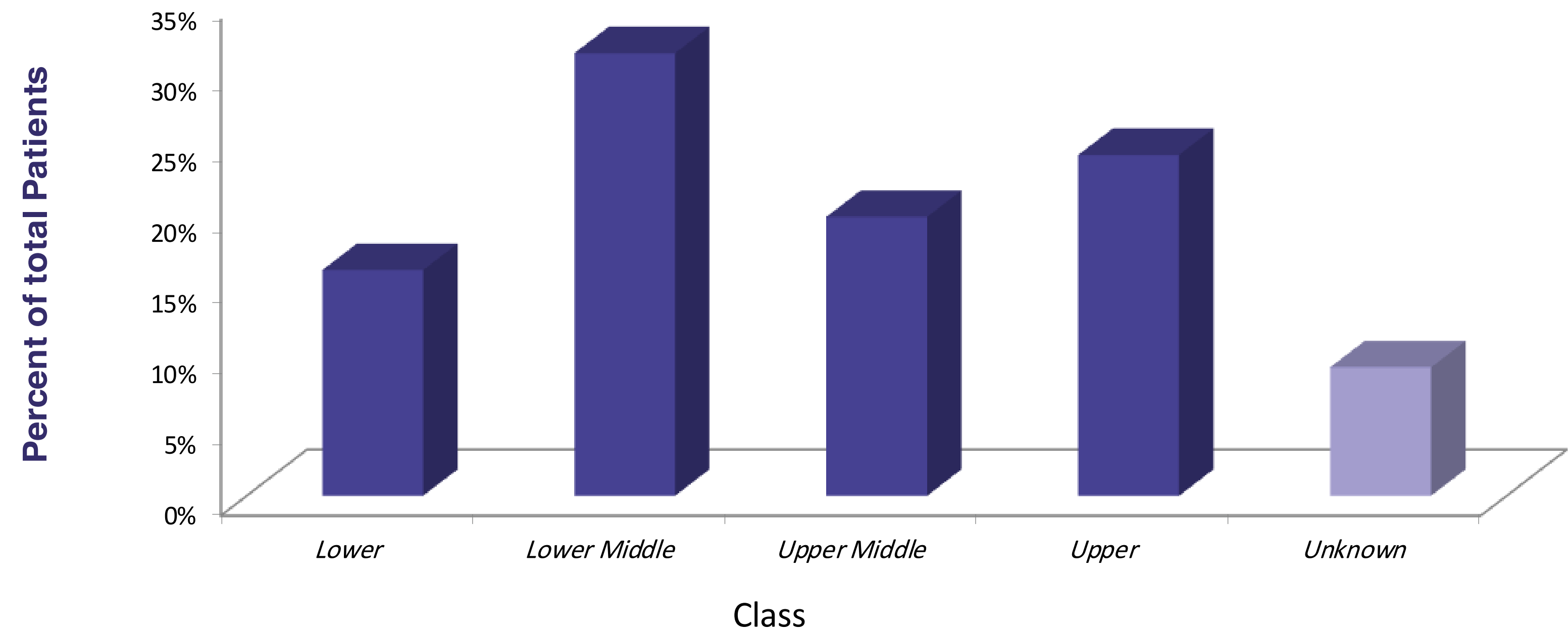
Patient Volume (2015-2023)



Patient Nationality (2023)



Patient Socio Economic Status (2023)



THANK YOU

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Twitter: Balsam-LCPC

Facebook: Balsam-The Lebanese
Center for Palliative Care

YouTube: BalsamLCPC