
Screening and early detection of Non-Communicable Diseases can save your life – ACT NOW.

by Serop Ohanian, June 16, 2025

Many times, when someone is diagnosed with a chronic illness, whether it is a severe or mild one, the first question that comes to our mind is, “Only if I’ve acted earlier and done medical checkups or medical screening tests earlier. Now it is too late!” What would you do if you realized that you’ve started to lose the most important virtue in your life, your health? What would be your first reaction? You will start to wonder only if “I’ve noticed this symptom earlier and acted accordingly?”

Chronic diseases are illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease. These Non-Communicable Diseases (**NCDs**) require long-term treatment and continuity of care throughout an individual’s lifetime. Although **NCDs** are not contagious, they are a burden to an individual who carries them and requires long-term treatment and comprehensive and regular follow-ups. This in turn results in a negative impact and costs to both the individual and the healthcare system.

Why Preventing Non-Communicable Diseases Globally and in Lebanon is Important?

NCD is not something new; **NCDs**, which are also Chronic diseases, have been around for most of human existence.

According to the World Health Organization (**WHO**), Non-Communicable diseases are responsible for almost three-quarters of all deaths worldwide: 41 million in 2019. Of these, 17 million deaths were premature (of people younger than 70 years old), with the vast majority occurring in low-and-middle-income countries. In Lebanon, the burden of **NCDs** remains the largest

component of the Country’s health profile with 91% of all deaths, attributed to **NCDs**.

Screening and Early Detection Can Be Life-Saving – Act Now!

Scientists and healthcare professionals have developed various recommendations to prevent, delay, and even treat **NCDs** when detected and diagnosed early. Early detection can be achieved through various medical screening methods that healthcare professionals advise and recommend. These screening phases of **NCDs** can start as early as childhood years and it can be altered within its trajectory if it is properly screened and detected early.

It is not too late to go for a screening checkup as long as you take this first step now. Whether you have never consulted a doctor or been screened before or whether you already have an **NCD**, such as heart conditions or high blood pressure or blood sugar control or lung conditions, you can still get a checkup to determine your health condition; this can alter the trajectory of your own **NCD** trend.

It is recommended that people start screening and testing for **NCDs** at the age of 40. This age threshold has been established because many **NCDs** become more prevalent as people age. Early screening at this critical age helps detect these conditions before they progress and cause harm.



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While screening at 40 years remains a valuable milestone for the general population, there is a growing recognition that earlier and targeted screening should be applied to individuals at higher risk. These include those with a family history of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or cancer.

- + Family history, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, or other health conditions.
- + Inactive lifestyle or obesity.
- + Smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke.
- + Presence of metabolic syndrome or pre-existing health conditions.

Most of these unnecessary deaths due to **NCDs** could have been prevented or delayed or life could have been prolonged due to early screening or diagnosis. But now, the decision is yours, if you do not do early screening now you cannot prevent yourself from having an **NCD** in the future.

Why Do People Not Change Their Behavior Despite Knowing That They Should?

There is evidence that some people do not want to change and or to step out of their comfort zone by early screening for their **NCDs**. People live with a mistaken belief that they are completely healthy and don't need testing nor screening. A lack of willpower to act is one reason and another is that people simply do not know where to start. Some say that they do not have the means or know where or how to access medical screening care within their surroundings, or that they lack time and postpone it.

Many **NCDs** progress silently, such as hypertension and alike. Regular screening ensures asymptomatic conditions like hypertension or dyslipidemia are identified and managed before causing harm.

Imagine that by being proactive through taking the vital step of early screening and detection of any **NCD**, you could identify an issue and receive necessary medical

advice from your physician to prevent possible worsening of a medical condition.

In Lebanon, the Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Center (**K-PHC**) makes it possible to address these reasons. You can make a change, and you must act for the sake of your health and the well-being of your loved ones. The first step of doing an early screening and follow-up on your **NCD** is crucial before it is too late.

Access Early Screening and Detection through the Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Centre

In Lebanon, the “Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Center (**K-PHC**)”, is a Non-Governmental Organization that is part of the Lebanese National PHC Network. The mission of **K-PHC** is to provide primary healthcare services that are accessible, affordable, attainable, and sustainable with high-quality care and services in an inclusive manner, with healthcare for all without discrimination.. Primary healthcare services are provided to more than 15,000 monthly beneficiaries to care for their complete well-being within their environment. In addition to treating, the **K-PHC** is committed to the early detection and management of **NCDs** among all beneficiaries aged 40 and above through screening all of the community members in the catchment area it serves in Beirut, Lebanon. A Description is provided in Figure 1.

The Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Team

The early screening process at **K-PHC** involves a multidisciplinary team of healthcare workers including a registered nurse and a primary care physician who ask a simple questionnaire. Then, after taking the vital medical signs of the beneficiary, blood diagnostic tests are



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ordered. After the test results are available, a complete diagnosis is made to the beneficiary, with a follow-up session explaining the behavioral changes that need to be made such as changes in lifestyle such as nutrition intake physical exercise, or even medication if needed.

The Center also offers various medications for managing chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and other cardiovascular diseases, including beta blockers, Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme inhibitors, **ACEI**, Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers, **ARBs**, insulin therapy, metformin, and sulfonylureas. Beta-blockers treat high blood pressure, heart failure, and arrhythmias by reducing heart rate and blood pressure. **ACEI** manages hypertension and heart failure by blocking the enzyme that narrows blood kidney vessels, while **ARBs** work similarly by blocking the effects of angiotensin II. Insulin therapy is essential for regulating blood glucose (sugar) in diabetes, especially type 1, and metformin is commonly prescribed to improve insulin sensitivity in type 2 diabetes. Sulfonylureas help lower blood glucose levels by stimulating the pancreas to release more insulin. These medications are provided through the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health for free. All of these medications are available to patients every month with a valid prescription from the Center's physician.

Success stories:

It is evidenced that prevention, education and follow-up are as important as cure. There are so many success stories that the **K-PHC** experienced, here are some examples:

+ A 41-year-old woman was accompanying a patient to the **K-PHC**. She was healthy with no medical complaints. A community screening Nurse reached out to her for screening. After conducting the proper blood diagnostic tests, it was found out that she had a high glucose level in her blood and was diagnosed with prediabetes. case. Thus, after three days, the Nurse contacted her and referred her to consult an endocrinologist physician where she was diagnosed with pre-diabetes, and education was provided highlighting the importance of diet modifications and exercise. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lifestyle modifications with proper diet and exercise can lower the risk of developing diabetes mellitus by up to 58% in at-risk individuals.





+ A 66-year-old man was contacted by a **K-PHC** community nurse who was waiting for his son at the dental unit to finish his oral hygiene and dental care procedure. The visitor is known to have Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) which is a type of **NCD**, and hypercholesterolemia and is on medications. The patient's vital signs were taken and one-on-one awareness was done highlighting the importance of a healthy diet and yearly follow-ups. His vital signs showed, BP:16/7cm/Hg (which is high) an Electrocardiogram (EKG) was done immediately and the result showed a normal one. Hence, he was referred to a physician directly for assessment where he reported having sudden headaches sometimes. The visitor was diagnosed with hypertension and a hypertensive medication was started. The hypertensive medications were modified and the patient reported later that he is feeling much better with no chief complaints. By reaching out to this visitor the **K-PHC** was able to diagnose him with hypertension on time. Note that, untreated hypertension can lead to complications including, heart failure, stroke, and many others.

+ A 73-year-old man presented to **K-PHC** for a follow-up with a cardiologist for elevated blood pressure. The patient is known to have Diabetes Mellitus, Hypertension, Atrial Fibrillation, and Dyslipidemia and is on medication. His vital signs showed high blood pressure and high pulse thus an urgent Electrocardiogram (EKG) was done which showed a normal sinus rhythm. The patient was given medication immediately as per the physician's order for her high blood pressure, after a while her blood pressure was regulated. The patient's medication was regulated and modified accordingly. The patient was educated regarding proper medication administration, and the importance of regular blood pressure monitoring and physician follow-up.

+ A 39-year-old woman, with no past medical history presented to **K-PHC** for a gynecology consultation for an acute complaint. The patient was examined by the gynecologist; an ultrasound was done which showed a normal pelvis with a small uterine polyp. A Pap smear was performed and medications were given for her chief complaint, awaiting the result of the Pap smear performed. The patient was contacted after three weeks for a follow-up and to receive her results. The patient came back for a follow-up consultation on her Pap smear result, which showed possible malignancy and a

need for a colposcopy biopsy. The gynecologists informed the patient about her case, provided guidance, and referred her to a hospital for further investigation. Later, the patient was contacted for a follow-up, during which she reported undergoing a colonoscopy biopsy and being diagnosed with uterine cancer. Hence, by early detection of her uterine cancer and providing her with the needed support and guidance, the life of this patient was prolonged. Early screening and detection save lives!

Medical Consequences of Not screening for NCDs:

Medical consequences of not screening and detecting **NCDs** early have various negative outcomes. Examples include:

+ The case of Hypertension, also known as “the silent killer”, can lead to severe complications like heart failure, stroke, chronic kidney disease, and vision loss if left uncontrolled. Patients may only recognize the condition after a life-threatening event, such as a stroke or heart attack since it is often asymptomatic in the early stages. For example, a 50-year-old man develops a massive stroke due to undiagnosed hypertension, resulting in permanent disability or death.

+ “Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)” case, persistent hyperglycemia causes damage to blood vessels and nerves, leading to complications like diabetic retinopathy (blindness), nephropathy (kidney failure), peripheral neuropathy (leading to foot ulcers and foot amputations), and cardiovascular diseases. A patient may only discover diabetes after having sudden vision loss or requiring dialysis for kidney failure.

+ “Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD)”, early CKD can progress to end-stage renal disease, requiring dialysis or kidney transplantation. It may cause cardiovascular complications due to hypertension and fluid overload. For example, a hypertensive patient with undiagnosed CKD ends up in the emergency room with fluid overload and heart failure.

+ The case of “Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)”, delayed diagnosis leads to irreversible lung damage, recurrent respiratory infections, and severe hypoxia. Patients may experience respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation in emergencies. For example, a smoker with undiagnosed COPD suddenly develops life-threatening respiratory distress during a minor respiratory infection.





Entrance of the Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Center in Lebanon

It's Not Too Late – Act Now!

Now is the right moment to take care of your health through early screening, detection, and treatment if needed, such as lifestyle modification or medications, preventing possible complications, or invasive procedures such as surgeries, or dialysis.

+ If you are above 40, live in Beirut, Lebanon, and have not been previously screened, then do the first screening to sustain your health: attend **K-PHC** for regular screening for **NCD**.

+ If you already have an **NCD** condition, re-check it again at the **K-PHC**.

+ Set a personal goal of getting a screening test at least once each year to take care of your health.

The **K-PHC** is dedicated to your health and has decided to extend its hours of service so that those working late can have access to PHC services and do an early screening and testing for **NCDs**.

If you act now, you will have that peace of mind that you've done the early detection and you will know the status of your health and your primary care physician will guide you through the next level. If you do not act now, then you will have missed an opportunity for an early screening at an affordable cost that would maintain and sustain your health and well-being.

Early detection saves lives. Don't wait – act now, your health can't afford delays.



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Figure 1: A Description of the Services provided by the Karagheusian Primary Healthcare Center in Lebanon about the NCD screening and Prevention packages of lab diagnostic tests and screenings.

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Karagheusian Association Services



**KARAGHEUSIAN
ASSOCIATION**
PRIMARY HEALTHCARE
CENTER

MEN OR WOMEN
*If you are above
40 years old*

**Because prevention
is better than the cure!**

NCD (NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE) SCREENING

KA-PHC is providing **(almost free)**:



- ✓ **Screening tests for Non-communicable diseases***
Once per year

**CONSULT
YOUR DOCTOR**
at **KARAGHEUSIAN
ASSOCIATION**

* **Fasting blood sugar and lipid panel**



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Are you diabetic?
Protect your eyes!

Receive the following for free:



✓ Diabetic patients
essential blood tests*
Once per year



✓ EKG (Electrocardiogram)
Once per year



✓ Retinal check-up
Once per year

+ Diabetic retinopathy is one of the most concerning **diabetic complications**. It affects the retina and can lead to **decreased visual acuity** or **vision loss**.

+ Diabetes can also increase the **risk of cardiovascular diseases**.

* CBCD, SGPT, SGOT, Lipid Profile, Creatinine, HbA1C, Blood Glucose, Microalbumin (Spot Urine)



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Check your blood pressure
**Watch out for the
silent killer!**

If you have **hypertension**, KA-PHC offers you **almost for free**:



✓ **Essential
blood test***
Once per year



✓ **Electrocardiogram
(EKG)**
Once per year



Blood Pressure Category

Systolic

/

Diastolic

Normal blood pressure

less than 120

&

less than 80

Elevated blood pressure

120–129

&

less than 80

Hypertension (Stage 1)

130–139

or

80–89

Hypertension (Stage 2)

more than 140

or

more than 90

**CONSULT
YOUR DOCTOR
at KARAGHEUSIAN
ASSOCIATION**

* CBC, Electrolytes, Lipid Profile, Creatinine, Uric Acid, Calcium, Blood Glucose, Urine Analysis, Microalbumin (Spot Urine)



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**The Non-Governmental Organizations Initiative
at the American University of Beirut**

certifies that

Karagheusian Association

has successfully fulfilled the Certification Requirements of the

NGOI ORGANIZATIONAL CERTIFICATION - PLATINUM LEVEL

VALID UNTIL JUNE 21, 2024

JUNE 21, 2022

DATE



NGOI, AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT



AWARD 2022

United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases
and the
World Health Organization Special Programme on Primary Health Care

recognize the outstanding contribution of the

Karagheusian Association for Child Welfare, Lebanon

towards the achievement of the noncommunicable diseases and mental health-related Sustainable

Development Goals

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization



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KA - LEBANON FIELD DIRECTOR
EDUCATIONAL TIMELINE



2003 AND ON...
20+4 years at Karagheusian Center and counting



SEROP OHANIAN
receiving his Post Graduate Medical Diploma from the Harvard Medical School

