

Honorary  
Doctorate <sup>dr.</sup>  
**Souha  
Kanj**



**RADBOUD  
UNIVERSITY  
PRESS**

**Doctor Honoris Causa Series**  
Radboud University | Faculty of Medicine



Honorary Doctorate Dr. Souha Kanj



# Honorary Doctorate Dr. Souha Kanj

15<sup>th</sup> of October 2020

**Radboud University**



**Radboudumc**  
university medical center

**Honorary Doctorate Dr. Souha Kanj**

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HEIMAN WERTHEIM

**LAUDATIO**





HEIMAN WERTHEIM

**LAUDATIO**

Dear professor Kanj, dear Souha,

It is with great pleasure that I speak words of praise to you Souha, 3600 kilometers apart from one another because of a pandemic that has been haunting us all for the past ten months. There is another pandemic ongoing at the same time, a more silent one, that has been ongoing for decades: that of antimicrobial resistance. Tackling the issue of antimicrobial resistance or AMR and improving infection prevention worldwide is what you strive for and what you are highly appreciated for. The road that brought you here is a fascinating one.

Inspired by a dear uncle who was your perfect example of how a doctor should be, you started to study medicine in Beirut in the 1980s. After your training, you eventually left for the USA with your husband, where you taught yourself English by watching a lot of television. Eventually, you were recruited for infectious disease training and research at Duke University. Great to see that your husband, a gastroenterologist, was also fascinated by the world of infectious diseases, as in 1996, you wrote a paper together on CMV infection following liver transplantation, with you as the first author and him as the second.

You returned to Beirut in 1998 to be appointed head of infectious diseases at the American University of Beirut Medical Center. You were one of the first women to lead an infectious disease division and an infection control program in the Arab world. And over time you have become THE role model and inspiration for both female and male physicians and infectious disease trainees in the Middle East and beyond. And you are an inspiration to us here at Radboud University. You occupied the Valkhof Chair in 2018, which was a highlight for many students, researchers, and clinicians. Your stay here at the time was an opportunity to come together and share expertise and ideas on a wide variety of subjects varying from fungal infections to tuberculosis to antibiotic resistance and stewardship. You have always kept a wide variety of interests. You mentioned once: "It's hard to focus on just one disease in a developing country". Currently, your focus is the ongoing pandemic in the



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challenging environment of Beirut, exacerbated by another recent catastrophe we all learned about from the news. I remember we had a meeting a week after the explosion to discuss the development of an open access antibiotic treatment guideline for low-resource settings. This illustrates to me what a strong, wonderful, and dedicated person you are in bringing about change in the complex problem of antimicrobial resistance.

Why is AMR a concern? Antimicrobial resistance is a major threat to the provision of safe healthcare, concerning all layers of society around the globe. You contribute to solving the issue through your daily work in your hospital, treating patients, teaching your students, doctors, and scientists, and creating new insights through collaborative research: international and multidisciplinary. Sharing knowledge is crucial to start solving this complex problem. In this arena of AMR and infection control, you are a champion with numerous regional, national, and international collaborations. With your engaging leadership style, you led Lebanon to sign the WHO hand hygiene pledge. Besides your scientific achievements, you are a great tutor and mentor. With patience, you spend a lot of time working with your fellows, side by side. “I try to show them everything that I fit into my day”, you mentioned in an interview once. “Inpatients, outpatients, the hospital rounds, and antimicrobial stewardship. If I do it, they do it!”

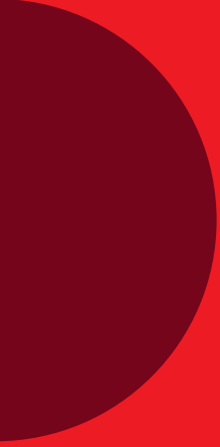
With your expertise and didactic skills, you are able to explain the complexity of infectious diseases to a wide audience, as we discovered during the Valkhof lecture you gave in 2018. The Valkhof Chair was the first step to where we have arrived today. This honorary doctorate reflects for us a strong desire to intensify our collaboration with you, Souha. It's a great honor to have you with us and we look forward to continuing our work together in tackling infectious disease issues of global importance.





**HONORARY  
DOCTORATE  
CERTIFICATE**





**HONORARY  
DOCTORATE  
CERTIFICATE**



## RECTOR ET DECANI UNIVERSITATIS RADBODI NOVIOMAGENSIS LECTORIBUS SALUTEM!

IN CHRISTI NOMINE. AMEN. Sapienti consilio a maioribus nostris institutum est, ut non modo ingenuarum artium studiosi, academicis disquisitionibus rite peractis, honorificum peterent industriae atque eruditionis testimonium, verum etiam homines doctos qui studiis atque litteris inter omnes excellent et ad artes doctrinasque adjuvandas maxime contulissent, eadem honoris significatione Universitates sponte sua decorare possent.

Quamobrem, cum Universitas nostra commemoravisset illustrissimam

**Souha Kanj**

**Natam Beryti, in urbe Libani, doctoratus honoris causa ei decretus est.**

Professor Souha Kanj malum morborum contagiosorum, praesertim qui obstant antibioticis, condicionibus perduris in urbe Beryto genuina pietate et cum constantia sapientiaque impugnat. Dux maganima animos omnium incendit qui morbos contagiosos perscrutantur devincere conanturque.

Quippe quae hominum doctorum omnium consensu eximias laudes meruerit et digna sit quae ab Universitate nostra insigni laureae decore augetur, Nobis, quo causam honestissimam adjuvaremus, summos honores ei tribuere placuit.

Quapropter Nos pro potestate nobis concessa eandem

**SOUHA KANJ**

**DOCTOREM HONORIS CAUSA**

sollemni modo ritumque creavimus et renuntiavimus et ei concessimus quidquid iuris et honoris legitime creato doctori vel lege vel more tribui solet. Cuius rei quo sit firma testataque fides, Diploma hoc manu Rectoris subscriptum et maiore Universitatis sigillo confirmatum ei tradendum curavimus.

Datum Noviomagi, in celebranda festivitate Universitatis nostrae diei natalis nonagesimi septimi, Idibus Octobris a. MMXX.

Rector / Promotor

Professor J.H.J.M. van Krieken

# RECTOR ET DECANI UNIVERSITATIS RADBODI NOVIOMAGENSIS

LECTORIBUS SALUTEM!

**I**N CHRISTI NOMINE. AMEN. Sapienti consilio a maioribus nostris institutum est, ut non modo ingenuarum artium studiosi, academicis disquisitionibus rite peractis, honorificum peterent industriae atque eruditionis testimonium, verum etiam homines doctos qui studiis atque litteris inter omnes excellenter et ad artes doctrinasque adiuvandas maxime contulissent, eadem honoris significatione Universitates sponte sua decorare possent.

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DOCTOREM HONORIS CAUSA

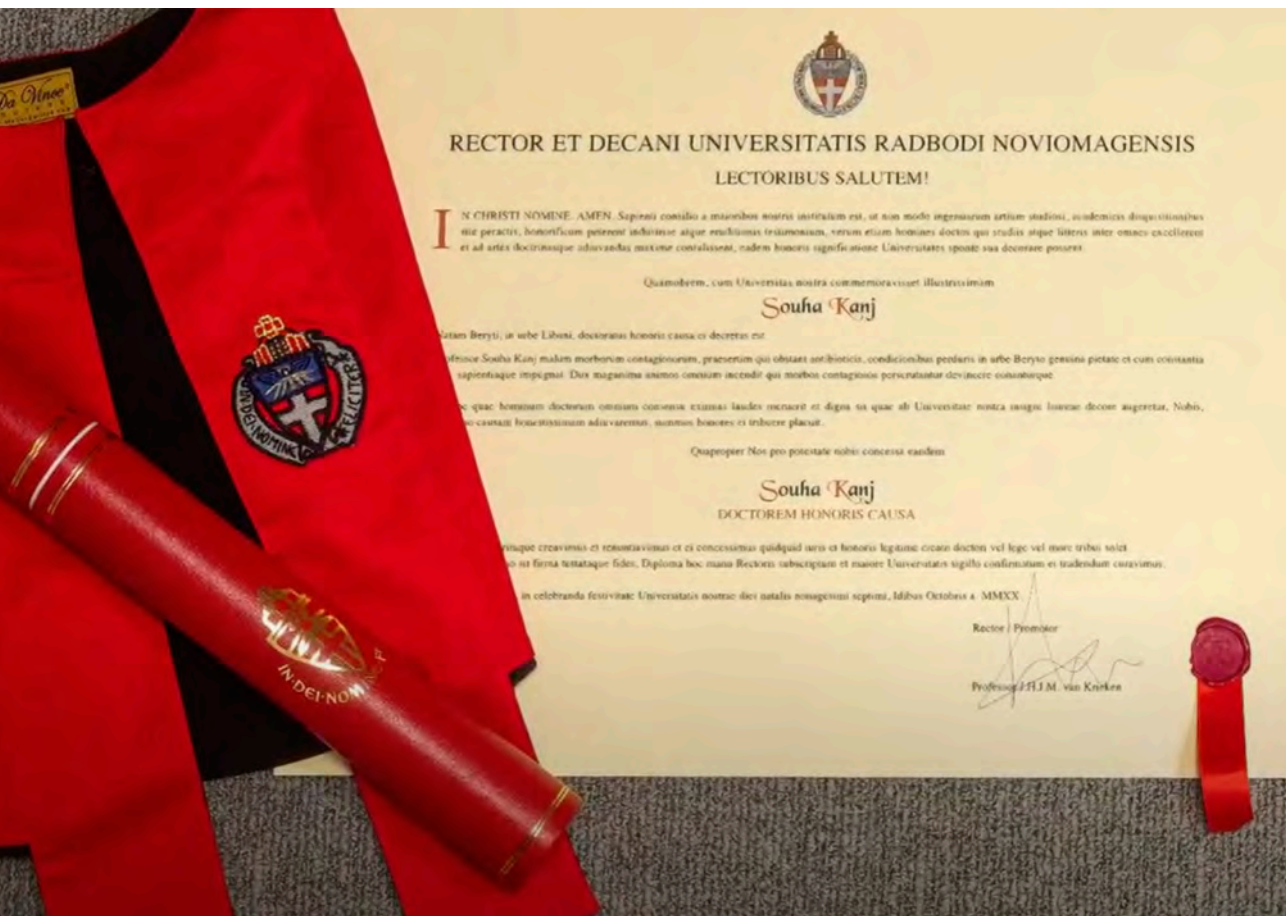
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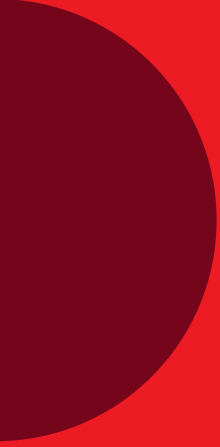
Professor J.H.J.M. van Krieken



SOUHA KANJ

# ACCEPTANCE SPEECH





SOUHA KANJ

# ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

First of all, I would like to thank Radboud University for this incredible honor. I am deeply grateful to be receiving an honorary degree from such a prestigious and respected university; it is a testament to the hard work and dedication I have put into my career, and it is a humbling and gratifying recognition of the impact I have had in my field. I am honored to be joining the ranks of the esteemed and accomplished individuals who have also received honorary degrees from Radboud University. As I receive this honorary doctorate, I would like to reflect on the path that has led me here. Since a young age, I have always been fascinated by buildings and had set my mind on pursuing a career in architecture. I only sat for the medicine entrance exam at the French Saint Joseph University in Beirut after being pressured by my late father, who always thought that medicine was the noblest profession. I was particularly influenced by my uncle, a renowned physician who practiced during Beirut's golden era. I must say I have absolutely no regrets about having chosen a career in medicine.



Souha Kanj as a  
6-year-old child.

Studying medicine in Beirut during Lebanon's 15-year-long civil war\* was definitely not a walk in the park. I had to risk my life daily to cross the checkpoints from West to East Beirut to attend lectures and rotations. Under sniper bullets and random shelling, I was never sure if I would come back home alive. After the fighting intensified, it became impossible to cross the conflict lines, and as a result, I had to continue my last two years of medical school at the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC) in West Beirut, where I lived. But as the common Lebanese saying goes, "Unfortunate things may not always be unfortunate". During my transition to AUBMC, I met the man of my dreams and decided to accompany him to the United States of America (USA), where he was accepted into the Internal Medicine residency program at Duke University Medical Center, a program traditionally ranked in the top 10 in the USA. I had



Souha Kanj and her husband Ala Sharara in 1985.

not sat for any of the required US exams and was unfamiliar with the entirety of the American medical system. Additionally, my English was quite poor, having attended French schools throughout my primary and university education. At the same time, I had to reject an offer to pursue a paid training position at a French university in Paris. This was in the midst of the most difficult days of the brutal civil war in Lebanon. I felt like I was gambling, and the risk of losing would be very high. As a young female doctor in a country so unfamiliar, I knew I would have to work exceptionally hard to establish myself. Seeing my husband Ala Sharara's performance at the residency program being exceptional and much appreciated, I was fortunate that he convinced the medicine program director Dr. Ralph Corey to grant me an interview. This was, without a doubt, the most important step that shaped my career, and for that, I am eternally grateful. After meeting me, Dr. Corey offered me a position in Internal Medicine residency, outside the required residency match system (a first in Duke's history) - this was a dream come true. I recall how overjoyed I was that day; Dr. Corey had set the bar high, and I was so focused on raising it even higher and surpassing his expectations. After three years of residency and two years of fellowship in Infectious Diseases (ID), I was appointed as a faculty member at Duke. I felt I had to do something different as practicing general ID alongside big-name experts would not allow me to distinguish myself and would require years of effort to achieve my goals of excellence in academic medicine. I recognized that there was an urgent need to develop infectious diseases consultation in transplantation, a field that was booming in the US. I dreamed big and proposed to establish the transplantation ID service at Duke. This proposal was approved by the division chief, Dr. David Hamilton, and the chair of medicine, Dr. Joseph Greenfield. The service became very busy in no time, and soon after, I had fellows and faculty members rotating there. This helped me to realize that whatever you set your mind on can be accomplished. Today, the ID transplant program at Duke is one of the best in the USA, providing care, education, and research that impact the lives of many, and I pride myself in having founded the program.



Dr. Souha Kanj with her two mentors, Dr. Ralph Corey and Dr. Daniel Sexton, at the 6th international symposium on Modern Concepts in Endocarditis and Endovascular Infections-Sitges in Spain, 2001.

In 1990, the civil war ended\* in Lebanon after 120,000 fatalities, an exodus of almost one million people, and several billion dollars worth of property damage. Beirut's downtown area had been totally destroyed and reduced to rubble. However, the Lebanese famed "resilience", a source of pride and wonder at home, perhaps partially explains the ability of the country to mend its wounds quickly. Beirut was reconstructed in just a short time and was once again dubbed the "Paris of the Middle East". In 1997, my husband and I were approached by the chair of Medicine at AUBMC, Dr. Samir Atweh, to consider joining the program there. Ala and I decided to return home and take a chance on a country that had once "let us down". After a short two years, I was appointed as Head of the ID division. Over the years, I was able to follow my interest and develop the various fields of ID, including infection control and prevention (ICP) and antimicrobial stewardship (AMS). I also acquired the knowledge and expertise in research that allowed me to rise through the ranks of academic medicine. I am currently a tenured Professor of Medicine,





Dr. Souha Kanj at the graduation ceremony at the campus of the American University of Beirut as an elected senator for the AUB Faculty of Medicine, 2016.

Associate Vice President for Global Affairs, Head of the ID Division, Chair of the ICP program, and the Co-chair of the AMS program at AUBMC. I am also a consulting Professor at Duke University Medical Center, where I have kept close ties with my mentors.

My path in academic medicine has been quite diverse. From the laboratory bench for basic research during my training at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute at Duke to the conduction of clinical trials to clinical microbiology research and now back to clinical research, I have been extremely fortunate to have had hands-on experience in the wide-ranging aspects of ID research. Each stage had its rewards and its difficulties, and each was instrumental in shaping my mind as an investigator and as a clinician at the same time, as I always keep my patients in mind while raising research questions. I initially focused my research on endocarditis and infections in immunocompromised patients. However, focusing on just one disease in a developing country was hard. Thus, I ended up pursuing research in many areas. My work on ICP

and hand hygiene led to Lebanon signing the WHO hand hygiene pledge in 2012. I have been able to conduct work and publish on various topics over the years, including hospital-acquired infections, the impact of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteraemia on outcomes of neutropenic patients with cancer, surgical site infections, varicella zoster virus infection of the central nervous system, among others. In collaboration with world-renowned institutions, we conducted projects addressing salvaging infected central-line catheters by infusing them with a lock solution. Over the past 15 years, most of my work has focused on addressing various issues related to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) among Gram-negative pathogens, a major threat to developing countries, primarily those witnessing conflicts and wars such as Lebanon. Work included epidemiological studies, ICP-related issues, and efforts of AMS to control the spread of resistance. National, regional, and international collaborations helped achieve impactful results. The Lancet Infectious Diseases invited me to write the first-ever review of AMR in the Arab nations. I was also a co-author of the PANORAMA study, which showed that bloodstream infections with carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales increase the length of hospital stay and mortality across low- and middle-income countries. Throughout my career, I was involved in various work and international committees, such as the AMR Leadership Group (ARLG), which is funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the GAP-ONE, an international network of specialists from multiple fields related to AMR, the International Society of Antimicrobial Chemotherapy (ISAC), and the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA). I took part in the work of the Joint Programming Initiative on AMR (JPIAMR) ARCH and COMBACTE-MAGNET EPI-Net networks, where many experts joined forces to formulate a set of white papers for target actions to link the surveillance of antimicrobial usage and AMR with AMS activities in different settings. I am also a board member of the Surveillance and Epidemiology of Drug Resistant Infection (SEDRIC) network, funded by the Wellcome Trust for work to contain the spread of AMR worldwide, and a board member of the AMS e-learning module for the Arab countries endorsed by The British



Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy. I have served in various functions in the most impactful societies in the field of ID and clinical microbiology, such as the European Society of Clinical Microbiology (ESCMID), the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), the ISAC, and various WHO programs such as the Research and Development Blueprint Annual Review of Priority Diseases, as well as the Global Infection Prevention and Control Network (GIPCN). In every role I played in these organizations, I have advocated for equal access to quality healthcare and establishing surveillance systems in low- and middle-income countries where AMR is at its worst. I have always jumped at the chance to participate in international studies to put our tiny country on the world map as a pioneer in medicine, innovation, and global

health. With the office of Continuing Medical Education at AUBMC, we have established regional training programs for infection control and prevention to improve the practices in the neighboring Arab countries. As of next year, I will assume my role as president of the Lebanese Society of Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology (LSIDCM), where I will work hard to ensure that the practice of ID in the country follows the evidence-based literature and to further develop ways to improve the training of junior ID physicians and involve them in research activities early on in their careers. Most recently, I was elected president-elect of the international organization ISAC, where I pledge to work hard to contribute to the global advancement of the field of ID in clinical care, research, and education.

Fungal infections are another field that has interested me since my early training days at Duke, inspired by Dr. John Perfect, a world-renowned specialist in the field. Since my return home, we used the very limited resources we had



Souha Kanj and Ala Sharara.

to conduct several studies to understand better the scope of the problem in the Arab countries and to recognize the challenges and knowledge gaps that would help in better understanding the burden of such infections. Many of the projects resulted in publications in high-impact medical journals and led to my recognition as a key opinion leader in this field.

More recently, with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, I immediately recognized that I had the responsibility to be at the forefront of the battle, which had devastating effects on Lebanon as it coincided with a total national economic collapse rendering a quarter of the Lebanese population below the poverty line. I was appointed to serve on the WHO COVID-19 Guidance Development Group of experts (COVID-19 IPC GDG), which further solidified my knowledge and confidence in issuing directives to my peers. Representing the Arab countries from the Middle East on these panels is a great honor and allows me to shed light on important related regional issues.

In times of difficulty, I found that focusing on work diverts the mind from negative influences.\*\* Despite all the challenges I have encountered during my career and the limited resources, I have managed to co-author more than 250 papers in international peer-reviewed journals, including 50 in the last two years. I was appointed to the panel of the IDSA guidelines for vertebral osteomyelitis and the European Confederation of Medical Mycology (ECMM) guidelines for mucormycosis and rare yeasts. I have been invited by reputable journals to submit reviews and original research papers. In addition, I have presented over 100 abstracts at international conferences and was invited as a keynote speaker to more than 350 national, regional, and international conferences, including IDSA, The European Congress for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID), The International Conference of Prevention and IC (ICPIC), and the International Congress of Chemotherapy (ICC), among the most prestigious conferences in the field. I have also been invited to write book chapters and co-author several chapters on *Acinetobacter* spp. and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in UpToDate, the most worldwide comprehensive electronic evidence-based peer-reviewed resource for clinical information.





Dr. Souha Kanj at work.

One of my top priorities as head of the ID division has been to provide evidence-based quality training and guidance to my trainees. I try to show them everything that I fit into my day and try to lead by example. I was fortunate to have had amazing mentors like Dr. Ralph Corey and Dr. Daniel Sexton at Duke, who led by example in excellence in healthcare, research, and education. Over the past several years, many of my mentees ended up choosing ID as a career, and I guided them through their paths. I have been fortunate to have had very bright and hard-working research fellows over the years who were vital to conducting and achieving the research projects and many other impactful works. In addition, some of them ended up joining prestigious programs in the

USA and Europe and have successful academic careers. To endorse a center of excellence in the ID division, I guided junior faculty members to select a specific area of interest and research to help them forge a focused academic career.

Dr. Souha Kanj with Dr. Ralph Corey, invited as a visiting professor to AUB in 2015. Picture taken in Hammana, Lebanon.



I have always thought that the road to medicine is not a linear one. As long as one sets clear goals, hardship and a few “lost years” should not make one feel like a failure or lose sight of the overarching goal. I have taught the younger trainees starting their careers that patience is key. Any time spent learning, even in an area that might not have been what one had initially set as a goal, will only broaden one’s horizon. I have learned that humility and empathy are the most important qualities to have when starting and maintaining a career in academia. I always believed that one’s biggest enemy is the self-ego. There is a fine line that separates confidence from arrogance. A smart person knows not to cross that line. My advice has always been that, in order to succeed, one

needs to be true to him or herself, aim for excellence, and deliver it regardless of who the recipient is. Our work reflects who we are, and if we aim to be reputable scientists, we should let our work speak for us. One important message that I have delivered in speeches addressing medical students is that they need to make time for themselves and manage their time well and seek true role models who can help shape their entire careers. I have advised them to look for mentors who teach them how to invest in humans, to be forgiving without holding grudges. This is especially true for women, who have to work much harder, particularly in Arab countries, to prove themselves in a world that is dominated by men. It is important to believe in one's ability to choose friends and partners who help achieve the highest potential for growth.



Kanj speaks at an event of the Lebanese Medical Students' International Committee (LEMSIC), an organization run by medical students, which aims to develop empowered healthcare professionals that will provide Lebanon with a sustainable and healthier future (2015).

As I receive my honorary doctorate degree from Radboud University, I reflect on my affiliation with this great university and all the friends and colleagues I have been able to make since I first met Professor Jos van der Meer many years ago. I have been privileged to be invited to this distinguished university for the Valkhof professorship in 2018, where I had the pleasure of interacting with the faculty, trainees, and students. On that occasion, I was amazed by the academic



excellence and the spirit of leadership that prevailed. Over the past years, I met other members of Radboud University and UMC; each one embodied the spirit of excellence, friendship, and collegiality and presented a true reflection of what this great university is all about. My affiliation with Radboud University was further solidified in October 2022, when I was invited to visit, interact with the faculty and trainees, and attend the superb 99<sup>th</sup> Dies Natalis ceremony. My interactions at the academic and social levels with the members of the department of Medical Microbiology led by Professor Heiman Wertheim and the AMS program headed by Dr. Jeroen Schouten were productive and very enjoyable. The highlight of my visit was meeting the Rector Magnificus Professor Han van Krieken and witnessing firsthand his collegiality, modesty, generosity, and welcoming spirit, reaffirming the true leadership that Radboud University preaches.



Prof. Dr. André van der Ven, Dr. Souha Kanj and Prof. Dr. Heiman Wertheim at the Valkhof Lecture at Radboud University Medical Center, 2018.

I believe that gratitude is the greatest virtue. One should be grateful to those who support and guide them throughout their career. By cultivating gratitude, we can create more joy, connection, and meaning in our lives. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the faculty and staff at Duke and AUBMC, who have supported me throughout my career and have played a vital role in my professional development. I am especially grateful to my Duke mentors, who have been particularly influential and supportive. I am thankful to my parents, my siblings, my very supportive husband Ala, and three children (Sima, Dina, and Dani) who have given me unconditional love and support and have pushed me to grow into who I am today. And last but not least, I am deeply grateful for Professor Jos van der Meer, Professor Heiman Wertheim, and the leaders of Radboud University, who had faith in me and believed in what I have achieved and contributed to medicine throughout my career. And I pledge to continue to work hard and strive to make a positive impact in my field and in society at large.



Souha and Ala with their children.



Souha with her mother Layla in 2014 celebrating the National Council for Scientific Research in Lebanon (LNCSR) award for excellence in research in the field of infectious diseases and microbiology.

\* The Lebanese civil war was a multifaceted armed conflict that occurred between 1975 and 1990. While it is believed that the Ain-El-Remmaneh's bus assault, where dozens of Palestinians lost their lives in a mass shooting, was the triggering event, multiple local and regional conflicts had been building up national tension way beforehand. Christians and Muslims fought and divided the Lebanese capital into East and West Beirut respectively. Once called the Paris of the Middle East, Beirut, the cultural hub of the Arab World, had all of a sudden transformed into a pile of rubble. Citizens were unable to commute between East and West Beirut and were often under the threat of snipers when attempting to cross the militia checkpoints. What started as an internal civil war soon involved other neighboring countries like Syria, Palestine, and Israel. After 120,000 deaths, billions of dollars in losses, and the exodus of over one million Lebanese citizens, the war ended with a cease-fire that was mediated by international and regional powers and the establishment of the United Nations Interim Force in South Lebanon. To this day, the Lebanese people live in the shadow of this conflict, and no one has agreed on one series of events that led up to the war. Although these 15 years remain a gap in Lebanese history books, which do not discuss any details of how this war came to be, it will remain a black dot in the hearts of the Lebanese people, who saw their youth die under shells and bombs and their country fall apart before their eyes, with no understanding of how they got there.

A close-up view of the Martyrs' Square statue in downtown Beirut, Lebanon (Wikimedia Commons, photo by Vladanr, CC BY-SA 3.0).



Green Line, Beirut, 1982 (Wikimedia Commons, photo by James Case from Philadelphia, Mississippi, USA, CC BY 2.0).

A night view of the waterfront towers in Zaitunay Bay, Downtown Beirut, 2013 (Wikimedia Commons, photo by Hussein Abdallah, CC BY 2.0).





\*\* After three decades of recovery following the end of the civil war, Lebanon plummeted into an unprecedented political and economic crisis. In October 2019, people took to the streets to protest their deteriorating living conditions amidst the regional conflicts that were impacting Lebanon's stability. The country was paralyzed for months as roads were blocked and citizens protested. A concomitant economic crisis and the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the living conditions of the Lebanese people. The 4<sup>th</sup> of August Beirut port blast which wiped off half of the capital, killed over 220 people, injured over 6,000, and displaced thousands of families, only added to the misery of the Lebanese population. To this day, the Lebanese pound has depreciated by 137 percent in 2019, 220 percent in 2020, and over 150 percent in 2022. Additionally, over half of the population is now considered below the poverty line. Amidst such an unprecedented collapse, electricity and water shortages, food safety, and healthcare were heavily impacted. Lebanon was reclassified as a low-middle-income country. As salaries become valueless, physicians fled the country to seek opportunities elsewhere (Europe, America, and the Gulf countries). Despite all the hardships, and the wealth of opportunities abroad, Ala and I stood firmly against all the odds and maintained faith in what we had left in this country. We took on from the lessons our parents had taught us about patriotism and resilience and were convinced that we cannot leave the country this time, not again. Who else was going to provide our patients with the quality healthcare that they require? Who else was going to push for AUB to maintain its regional and international position as a leader in healthcare and education? The challenges only intensified our efforts to put this small but worthy country on the global map.



The aftermath of the 2020 Beirut explosions (Wikimedia Commons, photo by Freimut Bahlo, CC BY-SA 4.0).

Damage after the Beirut explosion (Wikimedia Commons, photo by Mehr News Agency, CC BY 4.0).





On 15 October 2020, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Souha Kanj received a Radboud honorary doctorate in recognition of her achievements in the field of infection control and prevention, efforts in antimicrobial stewardship, and research on various infectious diseases, particularly antimicrobial resistant (AMR) bacteria. This edition includes the laudatio and the speech of our honorary doctor.

Kanj published the first overview of antibiotic resistance in Arab countries and discovered differences between neighboring countries in the epidemiology of antimicrobial resistance. She also developed infection prevention monitoring and education programs for healthcare workers, and private organizations in the Arab world. Thanks to her efforts, Lebanon has signed the WHO pledge for hand hygiene.

Kanj is not only commended for her expertise, didactic skills, and contribution to medicine, but also for her resilience and strong belief in making a positive impact, despite the difficult journey she has been through, having studied during the Lebanese civil war and being faced with numerous challenges that hit Lebanon and the region after that.

Prof. dr. Heiman Wertheim, head of the clinical microbiology department at Radboud UMC: "Kanj has become a role model and inspiration for female and male physicians and infectious disease trainees in the Middle East and beyond."

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