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Minister of Health Armen Muradyan Holds Public Seminar at AUA on Armenia's Health Challenges and Successes



Minister of Health Armen Muradyan

On August 28, 2015, the American University of Armenia (AUA) School of Public Health hosted a public health seminar where the Minister of Health Armen Muradyan discussed current health challenges and successes in Armenia. The Minister's presentation was preceded by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health and AUA on behalf of its School of Public Health. The MoU serves to

formalize the close collaboration between the two institutions toward improving public health in Armenia. This collaboration started 20 years ago with the school's founding and has strengthened in recent years.

AUA President Armen Der Kiureghian announced that the Minister of Health Muradyan has accepted an invitation to serve as an honorary member of the AUA School of Public Health Advisory Board. The Minister remarked that he will proudly bear the title, emphasizing that

AUA has made an invaluable contribution to educating quality public health professionals, healthcare managers, and researchers, noting: *"For many years this university formed a large group of public health professionals, and our health system dearly needs them. We thank the university for this great job and we see the public health graduates as an anchor in implementation of healthcare projects and evaluating those efforts."*



Seminar audience

Minister Muradyan provided a packed audience consisting of public health and medical professionals, AUA students, graduates, faculty and researchers, a comprehensive overview of the Armenian health system's performance, detailing health and demographic indicators, targeting current challenges, and sharing success stories. He also previewed several new health initiatives. Professor Muradyan stressed that the Ministry of Health has increasingly emphasized a "building/generating health" principle over the "treating patients" approach. He also stressed that the Ministry's priority is promoting and restoring health, not just for the sake of an individual but for the sake of society as a whole, noting: "Public health programs are very important for us, given that we see the role of public health as the most cost-effective tool for the long term development of the healthcare system."



Ashot Ghazaryan



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School of Public Health Hosts Two Satellite Symposiums, 4th International Medical Congress of Armenia



Serine Sahakyan, Nune Truzyan, Varduhi Petrosyan

On July 3, 2015, the American University of Armenia (AUA) School of Public Health (SPH) organized 'Hot Topics in Public Health,' a satellite symposium of the 4th International Medical Congress of Armenia.

The keynote speaker was Sandra Minor Bulmer, Interim Dean at the School of Health and Human Services at Southern Connecticut State University.

Several researchers of the AUA School of Public Health participated and spoke at the event, including Nune Truzyan, Serine Sahakyan, Anahit Demirchyan, Narine Movsisyan, and Ruzanna Grigoryan. Aelita Sargsyan from Fund for Armenian Relief also presented her work that she conducted with the AUA School of Public Health.

The presentations covered many important topics in the field of public health, including the value of health education, tuberculosis control in Armenia, mental health, smoking and health professionals, and environmental health issues among children and women of reproductive age.

Attendees of the 4th International Medical Congress of Armenia from the UK, US, and other countries, medical providers and public health professionals from Armenia, AUA students, researchers, and faculty members attended the symposiums.

On July 1, 2015, the AUA SPH hosted 'Advances in Nutrition, Diabetes, and Skeletal Health' satellite symposium organized by the Armenian Osteoporosis Association. John P. Bilezikian from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons was the chair and keynote speaker of the symposium. AUA President Armen Der Kiureghian made opening remarks.

Among the presenters were Kim Hekimian and Nicholas Hutchings from Columbia University, Varta Babalyan, President of Armenian Osteoporosis Association, Mariam Manoukian from University Medical Group Endocrinology and Metabolism, Edward Toromanyan, Chief Endocrinologist of Armenia, Varduhi Petrosyan from AUA SPH, and Samuel Badalian from SUNY Upstate Medical University and St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center. The presenters spoke about nutrition, thyroid disease, diabetes, and bone health.



Aelita Sargsyan & Ruzanna Grigoryan

Preventing Osteoporosis through a Healthy Lifestyle, the 9th International Osteoporosis Symposium Held at AUA



John Bilezikian

Advocating for good nutrition and a healthy lifestyle for bone health was the focus of the 9th International Osteoporosis Symposium that took place at the American University of Armenia (AUA) on October 22, 2015. The symposium was organized and co-sponsored by the Armenian Osteoporosis Association; JHM Charitable Foundation; College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University Medical Center; The Hovnanian Foundation; International Osteoporosis Foundation; Fund for Armenian Relief (FAR); and AUA School of Public Health.

Dr. John Bilezikian, Professor of Medicine and Pharmacology, and Vice Chair for International Education and Research of the Department of Medicine at Columbia University's College of Physicians and a member of the Governing Board of the

International Osteoporosis Foundation (IOF) was the Chair of the Symposium.

The first half of the Symposium was devoted to updating the audience on the new international developments in the field of osteoporosis, epidemiologic situation of osteoporotic fractures in Armenia, maintaining bone health and prevention of osteoporosis through healthy behavior and nutrition. Focusing on the importance of healthy life style to maintain healthy bones throughout life was in line with the theme of this year's World Osteoporosis Day of the International Osteoporosis Foundation celebrated on October 20.

In the afternoon, over 250 health providers broke into five workshops on different aspects of bone health targeting pediatricians, gynecologists, endocrinologists, rheumatologists, and school nurses, teachers and principals. The concluding session of the Symposium called for renewed attention to these nutritional factors that have the potential to improve skeletal health and thereby reduce the incidence of osteoporotic fractures in Armenia. All the participants received 4 continuous professional development credits from the Ministry of Health and certificates from the organizers.



Kim Hekimian

Second MPH Poster Conference Showcases Public Health Internship Experiences



Poster session guests

State Health Agency of the Ministry of Health, Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Health, the Center for Health Services Research and Development at

Second-year Master of Public Health (MPH) students at the American University of Armenia (AUA) School of Public Health (SPH) delivered poster presentations describing their internship experiences at various public health-related organizations in Armenia and abroad. This was the second poster conference led by MPH students.

Internship sites included the Armenian Red Cross Society, World Vision Armenia, Children of Armenia Fund, Jinishian Memorial Foundation, Fund for Armenian Relief, State Health Inspectorate of the Ministry of Health, State Health Agency of the Ministry of Health, Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Health, the Center for Health Services Research and Development at SPH, and Coimbatore Cancer Foundation in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.



Varduhi Petrosyan, Tsovinar Harutyunyan, Dhamodharan Ramasamy

The poster committee approached each student and asked questions about their internship projects. Voting took place for the best poster with Dhamodharan Ramasamy winning the majority of votes. SPH faculty, representatives of internship organizations, MPH students and alumni, and other guests participated in the voting.

The Public Health Internship program was added to the MPH curriculum in 2014 to provide students an opportunity to apply theories, ideas, and skills learned in the classroom to public health practice in real work settings, and to network with public health professionals.



Poster session guests

Symposium on Children's Dental Health at AUA Brings Together Close to 160 Health Professionals



Francisco Ramos-Gomez

public health programs, professors from the medical university, and officials from health agencies and non-governmental organizations.

The organizing committee of the symposium included Dr. Koumjian, who is a Clinical Associate Professor at Stanford University Medical School and the University of California, San Francisco School of Dentistry, Dr. Francois Antounian, board member of BAFA and Dr. Varduhi Petrosyan, Dean of the AUA SPH. The speakers of the symposium included Dr. Koumjian and Dr. Ramos-Gomez's, who is a professor in the Division of Pediatric Dentistry and the Director for the Pediatric Dentistry Preceptorship Program at the UCLA School of Dentistry. Dr. Ramos-Gomez is well-versed in issues facing underserved populations, both in the US and globally, in the areas of early childhood caries prevention, oral disease risk assessment, and community health.

The American University of Armenia (AUA) School of Public Health hosted a symposium, titled "Armenian Children's Oral Health and Dental Program." The two-day event, which was sponsored by the Bay Area Friends of Armenia (BAFA), took place on November 2-3 and is part of a much larger oral health education project initiated by BAFA and a US-based AUA supporter Dr. Jack Koumjian.

The symposium in November 2015, where attendees could earn seven continuous professional development credits provided by the Armenian Ministry of Health, was the second in the campaign to advocate for oral health. The first seminar held on the subject took place in October 2014. This year, the symposium attracted close to 160 health professionals from different fields and organizations including dentists, pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, students of dental, nursing, and



Drs. Varduhi Petrosyan, Francisco Ramos-Gomez, Jack Koumjian, Francois Antounian & Ashot Ghazaryan

PUBLIC HEALTH SEMINAR SERIES

October 29, 2015: AUA SPH honored Dr. Robert Bagramian for his contributions to AUA and AUA SPH, in a special event at the Akian Gallery. The event included a seminar presented by Dr. Bagramian, entitled “Oral Health in Armenia, Past, Present and Future.” Dr. Bagramian spoke about the condition of oral health in Armenia, particularly in rural regions, and about projects that he contributed to with the goal of improving children's oral health. Dr. Bagramian, who had served as the Dean of AUA SPH from 2007 to 2015, also made recommendations about future actions. Following a lively question and answer session, there was a reception with the participation of AUA administration and faculty, and MPH students and alumni.



December 1, 2015: Craig Norberg-Bohm, Coordinator of the Men's Initiative at Jane Doe Inc. and Co-chair of North American MenEngage Network, gave a talk entitled “Violence Against Women: How Men and Boys Can Join the Conversation To Be Part of the Solution”, at American University of Armenia to tell his story and share his experiences. AUA President Armen Der Kiureghian, AUA faculty members and students, as well as members of the general public attended the event that was sponsored by the School of Public Health. A lively discussion followed the presentation during which audience members brought up examples from their own work and practice in Armenia.



October 8, 2015: Dr. Sarah Kagan, Adjunct Professor at AUA SPH and Lucy Walker Honorary Term Professor of Gerontological Nursing of the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing led the Nursing in Armenia Project Team in an outreach effort to healthcare professionals in Gyumri. Dr. Kagan was accompanied by AUA SPH colleagues, Serine Sahakyan RN, MPH, and Kristina Akopyan MD, MPH. The team conducted a workshop aimed at improving the care for older people and highlighting opportunities to participate in the Nursing in Armenia Project, which is a national assessment project funded through a grant from Edele Hovnanian, University of Pennsylvania alumna and a trustee of her family's Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation.



September 15, 2015: AUA SPH hosted a public health seminar entitled “Epigenetics in Health, Disease and Aging” by Roza Selimyan, M.Sc., PhD, who talked about developments in one of the youngest and fastest-growing areas of research – Epigenetics, which offers a new angle to the long-standing debate about nature vs. nurture. She discussed Epigenetic regulation of gene expression addressing both site-specific and genome-wide changes in health, disease and aging. Dr. Roza Selimyan is a faculty member and Program Coordinator for the Health Science Intensive Program at Johns Hopkins University.



MPH STUDENT & ALUMNI SUCCESSES



Armine Abrahamyan MPH (2015) was awarded the Prize for Best Poster in the ASPHER Young Researchers Forum, a pre-conference event at the 8th European Public Health Conference that took place in Milan, Italy, from October 14 to 17, 2015. She received the 500-Euro prize for her winning poster presentation.



Vahe Khachadourian MPH (2011) has been granted the Calouste Gulbenkian Global Excellence Scholarship to continue his doctoral studies in epidemiology at UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. His research interests include disaster epidemiology, particularly the long-term impact of disasters on survivors' mental health.



Shabitha Alexander MPH (2016) was the winner of the Vartkess M. Balian Merit Award for 2015-2016 academic year. The Vartkess M. Balian Merit Award recognizes the best overall performance of first year graduate students at AUA and covers the winning student's tuition for the entire second year of study.



Arusyak Harutyunyan MPH (2009) completed Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center's Tobacco Treatment Specialist Certification Training Program and received provisional Tobacco Treatment Specialist Certificate in November, upon demonstrating appropriate skills on both knowledge-based and skills-based examinations.



Ruzanna Grigoryan MPH (2007) has been admitted to the Master of Science program in Philosophy and Public Policy for the academic year of 2015-2016 at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has been granted the Chevening Scholarship in Armenia covering tuition fees, travel and living costs and other expenses.



Arin A. Balalian MPH (2011) has joined the DrPH program in Epidemiology offered at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health. Dr. Balalian's research interests include life course and chronic diseases epidemiology, particularly the effect of childhood adversities on subsequent development and risk of disease.