

CHS NEWSLETTER

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Summer-Fall 2012 /Issue 10/

CHS SEMINAR SERIES



Professor Aram Chobanian

September 26, 2012: The AUA College of Health Sciences, in collaboration with the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia, organized a Public Health Seminar with Dr. Aram V. Chobanian, a world famous cardiologist and President Emeritus of Boston University as well as a Dean Emeritus and

Provost of Boston University School of Medicine. Dr. Chobanian talked about the major public health challenge of cardiovascular diseases, particularly hypertension, in Armenia. He emphasized the importance of appropriate control of hypertension through healthy lifestyle and medical therapy to prevent cardiovascular complications. Dr. Chobanian shared with the audience the international evidence behind the recommendations of the Seventh Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation and Treatment of High Blood Pressure of the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute in the US, which he chaired.

October 30, 2012: The CHS, in collaboration with the National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia, organized a Public Health Seminar with Professor the Lord Ara Darzi of Denham. Professor Darzi shared his wealth of experience in health care reform with the audience. He



Professor Ara Darzi

emphasized that priorities should be given to improving the quality of health care (including streamlining patient access) and preventive public health measures such as promoting healthy lifestyles (including reducing smoking rates) to improve health outcomes and quality of life. He showed evidence that reforms directed towards a more equitable integrated patient-centered health care system significantly improved outcomes. Professor Darzi holds the Paul Hamlyn Chair of Surgery at Imperial College London. He is an Honorary Consultant Surgeon at Imperial College Hospital National Health Service (NHS) Trust Hospital and Royal Marsden Hospital and holds the Chair of Surgery at the Institute of Cancer Research.

Large audience of public health and medical professionals, including students, faculty, researchers and physicians, members of the AUA community and Ministry of Health asked questions and received advice from distinguished guests during the seminars.



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Tuberculosis (TB) Research at CHS

he Ministry of Health of Armenia (MOH), for the first time, contracted the Center for Health Services Research and Development for two research projects on TB. The MOH's Global Fund Project Implementation Unit supported both studies.

The operational research on Working Migrants and TB in Armenia was a cross-sectional assessment of TB related knowledge, attitude, and practices among migrant workers throughout Armenia, who have had TB in the last four years and worked outside Armenia for more than three months. This project also looked at migrants' access and utilization of TB services in Armenia and in a host country of work.

The Russian Federation (RF) was the host country of work for 91% of migrant workers in Armenia; many of them worked in RF regions with the highest rates of TB prevalence. The percent of TB-HIV/AIDS comorbidity among the participants was 4.7 times higher than that among all TB patients in Armenia. The time period between first diagnosis and first treatment was about 5-times longer for those who were diagnosed in the host country of work than for those diagnosed in Armenia, increasing the likelihood of infecting others and developing drug resistance (DR-TB). Participants who decided to start receiving treatment in the host country of work were 3.9 times more likely to have failed and defaulted treatment outcomes than those receiving treatment in Armenia.

The operational research on Investigation of TB Risk Factors in Armenia provided an investigation of new and known risk factors that contribute to development of DR-TB from regular TB in Armenia. A case-control study found that the odds of developing DR-TB was 53



Educational Brochure for TB Patients and their Family Members

times higher among those who did not have ambulatory treatment for regular TB and 3.6 times higher among those who had incomplete ambulatory treatment compared to those who received full course of ambulatory treatment after controlling for other risk factors. The odds of developing DR-TB was 3.6 times higher among those who had less than daily TB drug intake during the inpatient regular TB treatment than those who had daily intake. Better social support from family and friends during their regular TB treatment decreased the odds of developing DR-TB by 10 times.

The overriding recommendations from these two operational research studies were to 1) establish close collaboration between TB and HIV/AIDS programs in the workers host countries and Armenia, 2) establish a much closer systemic collaboration between inpatient and outpatient TB treatment systems to assure successful completion of regular TB treatment, and 3) improve social support for TB patients and training opportunities for regular TB patients and their family members. In addition, strengthening systematic and comprehensive data collection, including drug sensitivity test results from all TB patients and establishing a single integrated database for TB that links data for each TB patient, including their migrant status, data on complete histories of regular and/or DR-TB treatment, laboratory test results, co-morbidities and contact information, would better inform the decision and policy makers about the TB situation in the country and current challenges in TB control.

With support from the Armenian Medical Fund and in collaboration with the National TB Control Program of the RA Ministry of Health, the CHSR conducted household—based TB infection control training pilot project in Aragatsotn, Kotayk, and Shirak marzes of Armenia with high TB burden. The project had several phases: document review, pre-intervention research, intervention, and evaluation. During the intervention the CHSR team organized counseling sessions with TB patients and their family members to improve their knowledge about the importance of 1) regular intake of TB drugs, 2) monitoring and reporting side-effects and symptoms, 3) supporting identification of potentially-infected contacts for follow-up check-ups, 4) taking appropriate safety measures as needed, and 5) providing psychological support to TB patients by family members. The purpose of this intervention was to reduce number of failed treatments and therefore, development of drug resistant TB, and spread of TB.

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Meghrigian Institute for Preventive Ophthalmology Global Cost of Correcting Refractive Errors



Dr. Kevin D. Frick

The Meghrigian Institute for Preventive Ophthalmology of the College of Health Sciences organized a Public Health Seminar on July 26, 2012. During the seminar Dr. Kevin D. Frick, a Professor in the Departments of Health Policy and Management and International Health at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland, USA, presented his work about the global burden of visual impairment from uncorrected refractive errors and cost-effectiveness of interventions correcting refractive errors. AUA students, graduates, researchers and faculty, and

ophthalmologists from different organizations attended the public seminar.

Meghrigian Institute in Kashatagh Province of Artsakh



Dr. Mikaelyan examines a resident of Kovsakan town

In August 2012, the Meghrigian Institute launched a project aimed at reducing the incidence of avoidable blindness and visual impairment among socioeconomically disadvantaged population in Kashatagh province of Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh). Kashatagh is one of the eight provinces of Artsakh and the largest by area. The living conditions and the situation in the health sector in Kashatagh are among the harshest. The Meghrigian Institute conducted free eye

screenings for the residents of Berdzor and Kovsakan towns, as well as Msheni, Moshatagh, Aygehovit, Urekan, Mirik, Hochants, Qaregah, Getap, Martunashen, Yericvanq, Mijnavan, Alashkert, and Ishkhanadzor villages. Overall, 161 patients received eye screening in Kashatagh.

Diabetes patients received educational brochures developed by the Meghrigian Institute to increase their awareness about diabetes management and prevention of diabetic retinopathy. All patients diagnosed with eye pathologies received free ophthalmic consultation about their diagnosis and further treatment. Those who had refractive errors or presbyopia (106 people) received prescriptions for eye glasses and free eye frames from the Meghrigian Institute.



Kashatagh Resident receiving an eye

Meghrigian Institute Celebrates World Sight Day (WSD) 2012



home

The Meghrigian Institute extended its program to elderly population living in retirement homes in Yerevan to celebrate WSD2012. In October 2012, the staff of the Meghrigian Institute launched the ophthalmic screening program

among elderly residents of Number 1 and Nork retirement homes and the Center of Social Services for Single Elderly. Detailed eye screenings were conducted among 340 elderly people who agreed to undergo the eye screening

procedures. All participants received free ophthalmic consultation from ophthalmologists. Patients diagnosed with eye diseases or refractive errors received appropriate medical assistance and eyeglasses from the Meghrigian Institute.



Meghrigian Institute in Nork retirement home

Risk Factors for Developing Myopia among 6-18 Years Old Schoolchildren in Yerevan and Gegharkunik Marz

Childhood blindness is a significant problem globally with an estimated 1.4 million blind children below 15 years of age. One of the main causes of childhood blindness is uncorrected refractive errors (RE). The Meghrigian Institute conducted a study to determine the prevalence of RE and identify the main risk factors for development of myopia among 6-18 years old school children living in Yerevan and Gegharkunik marz. The study results showed that the prevalence of myopia was nearly two times higher among children living in Yerevan compared to those in Gegharkunik. Both genetic and environmental factors were associated with myopia. The length of time of focused continuous close work plays a significant role in development of myopia.

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Protecting Children from Tobacco Smoke

AUA CHS responded to the request from the Boghossian Gardens (Lovers' Park) for cooperation in creating an outdoor smoke-free playground in the park. Together with the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia and DJ Vakcina, they launched the first smoke free playground in Yerevan on the occasion of the



Smoke free playground in the Lovers' Park

World No Tobacco Day on May 31. Children from the neighboring kindergarten and students from the AUA Experimental English Classes Program joined the



Dr. Arusyak Harutyunyan

visitors of the Lovers' Park to celebrate World No Tobacco Day. The CHS staff, faculty, and the MPH students organized different games and activities for children and distributed information leaflets on the health hazards of smoking and secondhand smoke among the visitors of the Lovers' Park.

National No Tobacco Day

On October 12, National No Tobacco Day in Armenia, Dr. Arusyak Harutyunyan was invited to speak about Tobacco Control Efforts in Armenia at the General Membership dinner meeting of the Armenian American Health Professional Organization (AAHPO) in New York City, USA. The participants of the dinner were eager to learn more about public health problems and their solutions in Armenia. Dr. Harutyunyan's presentation was broadcasted by a TV channel in the New York area and in Armenia.



Drs. Kim Hekimian and Arusyak Harutyunyan

LATEST NEWS



Round Table participants

August 23, 2012: The CHS hosted a Round Table on Infant and Child Nutrition. Dr. Kim Hekimian, faculty at CHS and Columbia University, led the

discussion with the main stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, United Nations World Food Program, UNICEF, World Vision Armenia, OXFAM, Fund for Armenian Relief, Institute for Child and Adolescent Health, Confidence Health NGO, and CHS faculty.



Dr. Aleksandr Lazaryan

November 27, 2012: CHS hosted a public seminar devoted to scientific breakthroughs in blood malignancies. Dr. Aleksandr Lazaryan, Assistant Professor of

Medicine, Division of Hematology, Oncology and Transplantation, University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, was the guest speaker. Interesting question/answer session with medical and public health professionals followed the presentation.

MPH ALUMNI & STUDENTS' SUCCESSES

Armine Podosyan, MPH (2011) has been competitively elected as a member of the Executive Committee of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) at the 40th WFUNA Plenary Assembly held on November 10, 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil.

Armine Vardanyan, (MPH second year student), received the "Best Student" Award from the Mayor of Ejmiadzin on November 17, 2012. This award recognizes academic excellence and service to the community.



Armine Podosyan



Armine Vardanyan

Arusyak Harutyunyan, MPH (2009) received a competitive Scholarship from the Institute for Global Tobacco Control to complete the Global Tobacco Control Certificate Program at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Learn more

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