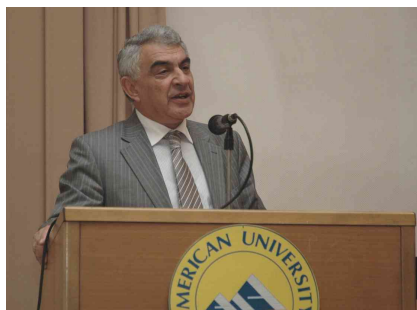




Strategic Planning for Tobacco Control in Armenia

The Center for Health Services Research and Development (CHSR) at the American University of Armenia (AUA) hosted the Third National Meeting of the Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia (<http://www.tobaccofreearmenia.am>) on November 13, 2008. The Coalition was formed in June 11, 2004 and is a voluntary union of 30 member NGOs.

The theme of this meeting was Strategic Planning for Tobacco Control. Dr. Lucig Danielian, Provost and Vice President of the AUA, and Ara Babloyan, Chair of the Standing Committee on Health Care Issues at the RA National Assembly welcomed the participants of the 3rd National Meeting. Dr. Danielian emphasized that the adoption of the Tobacco Control Law was a very essential step forward for our nation, but without relevant data it would be impossible to do important advocacy work to improve legislation in Armenia. Dr. Babloyan updated participants of the meeting on the recent developments in tobacco control related regulations and encouraged to continue the advocacy efforts in fighting against tobacco.



Narine Movsisyan, Tobacco Control Programs Manager at CHSR/AUA, presented findings and policy recommendations based on the CHSR/AUA report on the "Analysis of Tobacco Control Policy in Armenia 2005-2007," published with support from the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation Armenia. Dr. Movsisyan emphasized that the purpose of this publication was two tiered: not only to provide evidence-based policy advice but also facilitate public debate to continuously improve the state tobacco control policy.

Two discussion sessions were held as a part of this meeting: 1) Future Strategies for Tobacco Control, and 2) Evaluation of Targeted Health Programs in Armenia. Movses Aristakesyan, President of the NGO "Center for Economic Rights," was the moderator of the first session; the key speakers included Alexander Bazarchyan, WHO Focal Point on Tobacco Control; Anahit Muradyan from the Ministry of Education and Science; and Hovhannes Margaryants, President of the Armenian Public Health Union.



Varuzhan Hochtanyan, Public Policy Expert and Deputy President of the NGO "Transparency International"; Zaruhi Mkrtchyan, Senior Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Officer of the Project NOVA; and Movses Aristakesyan participated in the second session. Varduhi Petrosyan, Director of CHSR/AUA, as the moderator of this session closed the session with a discourse on the importance of incorporating all the lessons learned during the implementation of the State Tobacco Control Program for 2005-2009 when developing the Program for the next five years (2010-2015).

Representatives of different NGO's, students, alumni and faculty from the College of Health Sciences, as well as other guests from different organizations actively participated in the discussions about future steps and strategies in "striving for excellence" to improve the effectiveness of tobacco control policy in Armenia.

All participants received a copy of the bilingual publication "Analysis of Tobacco Control Policy in Armenia 2005-2007" (available at http://www.auachsr.com/publications_reports2008.php).



GRADUATING COHORT OF 2007 (PART II)

Marine Hovhannisyan, Dietary Changes of First-year Foreign Students Studying at Yerevan State Medical University

"The study demonstrated that dietary habits of foreign medical students significantly deteriorate during their first year of study, which, in turn, may have substantial impact on student health as well as academic performance."

Karine Kentenyants, Effectiveness of the "Social Assistance and Information for TB Patients" Project in Abovyan, Armenia: a Pilot Study

"The aim of the study was to assess the impact of the Armenian Red Cross Society "Social assistance and information for TB patients" project on TB related knowledge and adherence to the prescribed treatment of the project participants. The study results showed that there was statistically significant difference in TB knowledge between the intervention and the comparison groups due to ARCS intervention."

Aida Nahapetyan, Relationship Between Patients' Knowledge about Post Operative Risk Factors after Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery (CABG) and Adherence to Medication and Lifestyle Changes in Armenia (A cross-sectional study)

"Non-adherence after CABG is a serious problem. It may increase the rate of death, myocardial infarction, recurrent angina, stroke, transient ischemic attack, or the need for re-operation. The study revealed positive association between patients' knowledge and adherence towards diet and smoking cessation."

Hermine Poghosyan, Beliefs and Attitudes of Rural Nurses in Lori Marz, Armenia toward Contraceptive Methods: A qualitative study

"Nurses have many misconceptions about modern methods of birth control. This leads to incorrect counseling of women and contributes to unintended pregnancies."

Armen Torchyan, Knowledge of the Armenian population about healthy nutrition

"Experts consider that diet is a major modifiable factor influencing health, especially in the context of chronic diseases and it is also known that appropriate changes in nutrition patterns of people can considerably help to prevent main causes of disability and premature death in both developing and developed countries. A cross-sectional descriptive/analytical study assessed the level of knowledge of the adult population of Yerevan about healthy nutrition."



Nazareth Seferian, The Sale of Tobacco to Minors in Yerevan: A Mixed Methods Study

"Armenia acceded to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2004, and on December 24 of that year, a law regarding tobacco production and consumption was passed in the country, which banned the sale of tobacco products to minors. The study suggested that the ban on the sale of tobacco to minors has been ineffective and there are very few barriers, if any, for a child to buy cigarettes in Yerevan."



Maya Simonyan, Dignity and Health Related Quality of Life of Adult Residents of Yerevan, Comparative Survey of Refugee and Non-Refugee Respondents

"This study assessed the influence of dignity on the health status of adults aged 25 and over in Yerevan; and to determine whether differences exist between the data gathered from refugee and non-refugee respondents."

Marina Tiroyan, Investigation of Obstacles for Early Detection of Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip in Children, A Qualitative Research Study

"Developmental dysplasia of the hip is a disorder that requires early detection and especially early treatment. This study was the first qualitative study that explored the situation of DDH in Armenia."

Ruzan Udumyan, Systemic Hypertension and Risk of Obstructive Sleep Apnea Syndrome: a Case-Control Study in Yerevan, Armenia

"Systemic hypertension (HTN) and obstructive sleep apnea syndrome (OSAS) are common conditions affecting middle-aged and elderly adults. The study measured the independent association between risk of OSAS and systemic HTN in adult people living in Yerevan considering all known confounders."



Full project reports are available at www.auachsr.com

Our goal is to make tobacco control efforts effective and sustainable

Since December 2003, the Center for Health Services Research and Development, American University of Armenia (CHSR/AUA) led an ambitious multi-pronged tobacco control project being implemented in partnership with the Armenian Public Health Association and the Armenian Public Health Union. Together they formed a voluntary consortium, the Armenian Public Health Alliance (ArmPHA), to multiply efforts in building public support for the development and implementation of tobacco control policy in Armenia.

This multi-year project was supported by the Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Armenia and the OSI Network Public Health Program.

The project team was instrumental in facilitating a public debate for de-normalization of smoking in the Armenian society and building stronger support for implementation of tobacco control policies. “We were following evidence-based approaches. A number of resources were on fingertip, we tried not to miss any. And of course, the project greatly benefited from the advice and stewardship of the public health and political science faculty who were involved since the planning stage”, acknowledged Dr. Narine Movsisyan, the OSI tobacco control policy project director.



Public advocacy, stakeholders' education, and media partnerships were the main tools employed for achievement of project goals. The activities included raising awareness among diverse influential groups, such as members of the National Assembly, journalists, state officials, and also uniting non-governmental organizations into the public Coalition for Tobacco Free Armenia. The project team, with the Coalition support, carried out a number of letter-writing campaigns, numerous discussions, press-conferences, and other events. The Coalition convened three national meetings to discuss and support the public and state efforts for advancement of tobacco control policy in Armenia.

Within this project, the CHSR/AUA team conducted a population-based survey of public perceptions and attitudes toward tobacco control policy attempting to develop an evaluation tool for the assessment of the tobacco control efforts. The project also facilitated the maturation of the civil society organizations and their expertise in this important public health field through participation in international professional and civil society networks.

The success of the project can be measured by the improved national tobacco control policy, greater publicity and awareness about the issue of tobacco control, and the government's stronger support for tobacco control (including accession to the international treaty on tobacco control and allocations of state funds). However, daily efforts are necessary to sustain active tobacco control efforts in Armenia, and we must learn from the lessons of the past to be more effective in the future by documenting what was already achieved.



LATEST NEWS

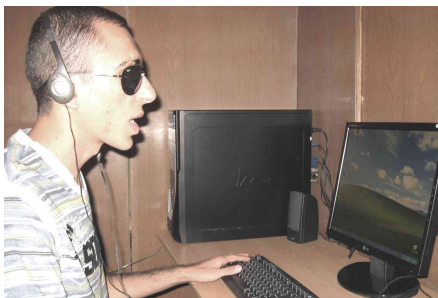
October 3, 2008: Breastfeeding in Armenia: Successes and Challenges

CHS organized a panel discussion “Breastfeeding in Armenia: Successes and Challenges” as a part of its Public Health Seminar Series.

The panel included Dr. Kim Arzoumanian, Visiting Assistant Professor, AUA; Dr. Karmela Poghosyan, Baby Friendly Hospital and Baby Friendly Polyclinic Initiative Program Coordinator, Ministry of Health (MOH) of Armenia; and Dr. Susanna Harutyunyan, President, “Confidence” Health NGO, Lecturer, Department of Pediatrics, YSMU.

Dr. Arzoumanian presented the overview of breastfeeding (BF) promotion activities in Armenia in 1993-1997. Dr. Karmela Poghosyan introduced the current rates of BF in Armenia, emphasizing the impact of implemented BF promotion programs. She also presented the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and the Baby Friendly Polyclinic Initiative, which were aimed at provision of continuity in proper infant feeding practices. Dr. Susanna Harutyunyan presented about implementation of WHO International Code on Breastmilk Substitutes and the Armenian Law on Advertisement in Armenia and the results of monitoring by “Confidence” Health NGO. Presentations were followed by an active discussion during the question/answer session.

During the discussion representatives of Project NOVA, the Primary Health Care Reform project, and World Vision Armenia briefly presented their activities in the area of infant feeding in Armenia. Seminar attendees included health NGOs, AUA alumni, students, and faculty, and the general public.



October 9, 2008: Garo Meghriyan Institute celebrated World Sight Day with the Yerevan Municipality Evening Boarding School for Blind and Visually Impaired Adult, and donated a computer with a scanner, printer, headphones, and speakers to the Boarding School; “Arev” software was installed on this computer which allows blind people to read books and use the internet.



September 11, 2008: Dr. Sarah Kagan, Visiting Professor at the CHS, Ralston House Term Professor of Gerontological Nursing at the University of Pennsylvania at the public seminar “Palliative Care: History, Assumptions, and Practice – An American Perspective”.



December 13, 2008: MPH Annual Workshop at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD, USA.

To learn more

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