

# Armenian Healthcare Association of the Bay Area

## From AHABA President

I feel both humbled and inspired as I reflect on the year 2014, the year when AHABA was reestablished as a nonprofit organization.

We had a great start forming a Board of Directors composed of motivated and talented individuals who came together for the improvement of Armenian Healthcare. The projects carried out this year in Armenia and locally have been successful and we feel the strong support of our Bay Area Armenian community behind our efforts.

As I look toward the year 2015, the year that I hope will be a pivotal year in the recognition of Armenian Genocide by the civilized world, I encourage you to embrace the essential survival skills passed to us through our traditional Armenian roots: stay united with our family and friends, invest in our personal health and wellness, and extend generosity to the community around us.

Thank you once again for your continuous support.

With love,

Elena Sagayan, MD, MPH  
on behalf of AHABA Board of Directors



## Editor's Note

*Dear Friends, this is the first newsletter of the Armenian Healthcare Association of the Bay Area (AHABA). We plan to publish it once or twice a year to showcase our activities. Today we report on our Diabetes and Women's Health projects in Kapan, a Symposium on Osteoporosis held in Yerevan last year, and pertinent news items. We will also have a medical advice column by one of our doctors in each issue of the newsletter. We hope you will find them all interesting. We would appreciate any comments or suggestions you may have regarding the format or content of the newsletter. Please send them to the Editor.*

**AHABA mission –  
Foster collaboration among Armenian healthcare  
professionals in the Bay Area to support healthcare  
programs in Armenia and locally.**

## Inaugural event of AHABA



On April 5, 2014, AHABA had its Inaugural Banquet, honoring Dr. Krikor Soghikian.

Dr. Armen Der Kiureghian, current President of the American University of Armenia (AUA), was the keynote speaker, presenting Dr. Soghikian as a prominent member of the Bay Area Armenian community, one of the founders of the public health department of AUA in Yerevan. He was also, together with Dr. Carolann Najarian, the initiator of primary care in Armenia. We had over 120 guests at the event, and \$18,000 was raised. We thank all of you who were in attendance.

### SOGHIKIAN LIBRARY AT AUA

To honor Dr. Soghikian, AHABA made a donation to upgrade the Soghikian Reference Library in the Department of Health Sciences at AUA. Board member Molly Freeman, while traveling to Armenia, met with AUA library director, Satenig Avakian regarding their needs. The Board chose to donate \$1500 for subscription to the World Health Organization HINARI Database.



## Women's health project

Women's health is one of the most important issues facing Armenia, yet despite the current efforts of governmental programs, statistical indicators of women's health are lagging behind those of the developed world. Many of women's diseases could be prevented if appropriate screening programs were implemented at the population level. Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer affecting Armenian women age 15-44. It has a high mortality rate; it affects relatively young and fertile population of women, leading to loss of productive members of society. According to WHO data, only 17% of women age 30-60 have had a PAP smear in Armenia from 2000-2006, and HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) testing has simply never been available.

AHABA's women's health project this year aimed at improvement of cervical cancer screening in Armenia, and detection and treatment of STDs. During our trip to Kapan in October, we performed PAP smears in 55 women aged 25 to 65, and diagnosed STD's. We offered treatment for common gynecological conditions to women living in Kapan and surrounding areas. We also trained local obstetrician/gynecologists and midwives in current methods of cervical cancer detection, and demonstrated the treatment techniques for precancerous conditions. We donated the testing equipment and supplies, and covered the cost of laboratory work.



## Kapan project

In October of 2014, our team of Drs. Elena Sagayan (Ob/Gyn), Mariam Manoukian (Endocrinology), Ani Tajirian (Dermatology) from AHABA, and Nona Pashinian (Rheumatology) from Southern California, visited the Armenian city of Kapan with a medical mission. Our mission was undertaken in response to an invitation from Kapan physicians who had learned about our successful project in Yerevan in 2013. We delivered blood pressure cuffs, oximeters, glucometers and glucose test strips for preventive health screening. Most people in Armenia visit a physician only when they have an ongoing disease. This is the second year that we are implementing preventive measurements of vital signs and screening to diagnose early stages of medical conditions in an otherwise “healthy” population. We also examined about 150 patients in our specialties, with different medical conditions, and gave presentations to the local physicians. Despite the lack of such technology as biochemical analyzers, CT scanner, ultrasound, mammography, local doctors were eager to learn and spent all Sunday observing us and also actively participating in our lectures on Monday.

Kapan is the capital of Syunik, which is the most southern region of Armenia, comprised of four regions – Sisian, Goris, Kapan and Meghri. In the course of the last 20 years, the people of Syunik have faced the stress of war and ecologic problems. Kapan is surrounded by several mining tails which contaminate the environment – both water and soil - with toxic waste. All this, combined with unhealthy food and lifestyle, may have resulted in the rise of thyroid, oncologic and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and other health problems, creating a serious burden on both families, and the health care system.

On behalf of AHABA, a \$2,000 donation was made for the repair of two bathrooms of the polyclinic that serves more than 30,000 people.

### In memory of Dr. Samuel Malayan (1949-2014)

Samuel Malayan was born and raised in San Francisco in the family of Ara and Diana Malayan. An diligent and inquisitive student, he attended UC Berkeley for his undergraduate degree, earned his Master degree and PhD at UC San Francisco, and attended medical school at Wayne State University. He trained in residency and fellowship at USC, and practiced endocrinology in Glendale from 1997 until 2014.

Samuel had a gift of giving. For many years he actively supported children with diabetes in Armenia, supplying insulin and test strips free of charge to many in need. In his memory, donations were made to the Armenian Juvenile Diabetes project of AHABA. We are grateful to Sam’s sister Mimi Malayan and his children, Ara, Gayane and Anahit, for their generosity.

### Osteoporosis Symposium

For the last nine years, Dr. John Bilezikian, chief of the Endocrine Division of Columbia University Medical School, has organized Osteoporosis Symposium in Armenia to raise awareness of fracture risks, and promote osteoporosis prevention and treatment. Thanks to his efforts, there are now seven bone densitometers in Armenia: five in Yerevan, one in Artsakh, and one in Gyumri. Three of our AHABA physicians, Drs Mariam Manoukian, Elena Sagayan, and Hasmik Arzumanyan presented in the symposium on October for 400 local physicians. They were part of a round table discussion with Armenia’s First Lady, Mrs.Rita Sargsyan, who promised to increase the nutritional value of the food for school children. Participants saluted with a glass of milk

## Diabetes Project

For the last four years we have been working with the Ministry of Health of Armenia, Armenian American Medical Society of Southern California (AAMS), and the Muracan Children's Hospital of Yerevan, to improve the care of children and adults with type 1 diabetes. We have been helping to organize and run diabetes camps for children with diabetes. Each year about 30-40 children receive an education for the proper care of their disease.



There are currently 12,500 people in Armenia who receive insulin; 450 of them are under 16 years old. The total number of people with diabetes is officially reported to be 72,000. In Armenia, where health care capacity is inadequate, type 1 diabetes can be a death sentence for a vulnerable child. Unsatisfactory metabolic control, exposure to both severe hypoglycemia and chronic hyperglycemia, as a result of decreased access to self-care tools, results in stunted growth in children, adverse effects on neurological development, and increasing blindness, kidney failure, and cardiovascular disease in adulthood.

The Ministry of Health of Armenia is currently providing diabetic patients with insulin free of charge. However, glucometers, test strips, syringes, and needles, are still not provided, even to children who are poor or disabled. We are collaborating with Yeraz and AAMS to develop sustainable initiatives to address these issues, as well as to lobby the Armenian government to find a long-term solution for patients with diabetes in Armenia.

## AHABA Annual Banquet

**100 YEARS: Survival and Rebirth - February 28 2015, at St. John Armenian Church Hall**  
 "Reflections On The Armenian Psyche One Hundred Years Later: Have We Learned Anything?"  
 Our guest speaker and honoree will be the world renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Hagop Akiskal.

## 4th International Medical Congress of Armenia July 2-4, 2015 in Yerevan

Local physician leaders in Yerevan are planning the 4th International Medical Congress of Armenia, an international Congress which will take place at the Marriott Hotel on the Republic Square in Yerevan. The Congress, which is expected to draw upwards of 600 participants, including 200 from the Diaspora, is held every 4 years in Armenia. These Congresses alternate every two years with the Armenian Medical World Congresses held in the Diaspora. The 12th Armenian Medical World Congress will be held in 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

AHABA has traditionally had a strong showing at previous Congresses. Please let us know if you are considering attending this important event.

Information regarding registration, abstract admission, and other details are posted online at [www.4imca.am](http://www.4imca.am)

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