Telemedicine In Focus: narrowing the gap of living standards between Yerevan and rural Armenia

The Armenia Fund USA Telemedicine program, first launched with the completion of the Amnon Pagonian Polyclinic and Hirain and Anna Hovnanian Diagnostic Center in Stepanakert in 2005. It is an innovative approach to disseminating medical knowledge and best practices through technology. The success of the program was marked by yet another teleconference held at the Yerevan State Medical University (YSMU) of Mkhitar Heratsi in February, 2008.

Sponsored by Armenia Fund USA, and organized by the Department of Postgraduate/Continuing Education at YSMU, the teleconference focused on pediatrics and connected medical professionals in this field from different parts of the country. While the main two focal points of the teleconference were Yerevan and Stepanakert, many of the participating pediatricians came from more than a dozen regions, including Goris, Amor, Vagharshapat, Martuni, Alaverdi, Berd, Ijevan, Dildjin, Masis, Abovian, and Martuni, Alaverdi, Berd, Idjevan, Dilidjan, Masis, Abotyan, Khachin, Ashtarak, and Aragats.

The conference brought together more than forty medical professionals in Yerevan and more than fifty in Stepanakert, Nagorno-Karabakh.

Aimed at improving delivery of pediatric care in the less developed regions of the country, the teleconference was fully translated into Armenian. Two most important topics covered included: “Febrile Convulsions in Childhood” presented by Dr. Arusyak Khachatyryan, MD from St. Astvatsatsin Medical Center, and

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**Children in Action**

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Telemedicine in Focus: Hope Through Technology

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Our Telemedicine Program and the People That Make It Happen

Telemedicine is an innovative approach to medical care linking a physician with a patient in a remote area. The state-of-the-art medical technology makes it possible to ignore constraints of time and distance, and with the concurrent advancement of Internet and digital communication, it revolutionizes the way healthcare is delivered to people in dire need.

The launch of Armenia Fund’s Telemedicine Program, with the installation of equipment and provision of adequate technical training to the medical team, was a success with the completion of Armine Pogosyan’s Polyclinic in Stepanakert. Actual connection of remote regions to the Telemedicine network, however, remains a serious challenge. “This is where Karabakh Telecom partnership added so much value to our program”, says Raffi Festekjian, Chairman of Armenia Fund USA. “We never thought it would actually be possible to conduct these advanced medical training sessions so quickly and make it available to some of the most underserved communities in the country.”

Karabakh Telecom provided Armenia Fund USA with the necessary high-speed Internet connection that has made possible a series of telemedicine seminars since September 2007. But this was only the beginning. With the successful installation of equipment in Stepanakert, Karabakh Telecom announced it will continue providing service to the Fund’s Telemedicine program free of charge.

“Karabakh Telecom strongly believes that a strong society is the foundation of a strong nation, and accordingly whatever a commercial institution receives from society in terms of revenues, it should return part of it back to society by other means,” says Raphael Yirikian at Karabakh Telecom. “Today there are over 600 needy families and individuals, 40 charitable and non-profit organizations, as well as 4 educational institutions that are benefiting all year round from assistance programs sponsored by Karabakh Telecom.”

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Rural Development: “We Know There Are People Who Care”

Robert Movsisian

Janyatagh village in the Martakert region of Karabakh has many big families. Robert Movsisian comes from one of them. He works at a tractor and farm machinery base set up by Armenia Fund in 2006. He is one of 26 workers at this newly created institution. “After I was discharged from the army I couldn’t find work for two years,” Robert says. “It’s a good thing this base opened...I work as a welder now.”

Robert, like others in Martakert, experienced the ordeal of the war and felt the bitterness of destruction and expulsion. “I was a little boy when we left the village. Then when the war was over we came back to our village,” he remembered. “What village?” There was no village. Interrupted Maxim Petroyan, the chief engineer at the station.

Like many other villages in Martakert, Janyatagh was completely destroyed due to the war, but people have returned and are trying to render it habitable.

I support because...

July, 2008

World food prices are skyrocketing and creating a food crisis in many countries, including for the majority of Armenia’s population. Priority must be given to domestic food production in order to decrease dependency on the international market. Small family farms and cooperatives should be re-vived – given access to land, water, seeds and fertilizer. This means investment into farmer-based agriculture (in contrast to industrialized, large-scale unsustainable agricultural systems). And this is where Armenia Fund’s Rural Development Program can play a major role and already has begun to show promise by reviving the agro-economies of several villages.

The agro-ecological approach to farming is safe for the environment, is low-energy input – consumes less fossil fuel, no synthetic fertilizers. Plus, it provides food and employment to the poor. Best of all, once established, small to medium sized farms are more productive, than large-scale industrial farms. Because the produced food is traded locally or regionally, less fossil fuel is used for food transportation. Development of Armenia’s agriculture must be carried out with the right approach in order to provide food and employment for the population.

I believe that Armenia Fund’s Rural Development Program can and will accomplish a lot in that direction. This is why I support the Armenia Fund.

Anne Anahid Shinnian-Orlando

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