

**Name of Event:** Substance Abuse Prevention Conference

**Location:** Gudauri, Georgia

**Dates:** July 27-28, 2001

**Purpose:**

This was the first time AIHA conducted a Substance Abuse Conference in the Caucasus region. It is evident that substance abuse is a growing problem in the countries of the region as is in the rest of the former Soviet republics. Moreover, it is believed that prevalence of heavy drug users and substance abuse rates in adolescents are dramatically increasing too. Problem is also aggravated by the fact that obtaining reliable epidemiological information for analysis seems almost impossible as alcohol and drug abusers deem to hide their problem. Two other important issues are closely linked with substance abuse: crime rates among substance abusers and infectious diseases such as HIV and Hep B&C among injective drug users. Speaking generally, the problem is rather complex requiring complex approach, involvement of various stakeholders at national, district, and community levels, and coordination of their activities.

**Participants and Faculty:**

Seven Armenian and Georgian partnerships were represented at the Conference: Kutaisi-Atlanta, Mtskheta-Mtianeti-Milwaukee, Tbilisi-Minneapolis, Tbilisi-Scranton, Geghargunik-Providence, Lori-LA, Yerevan-LA, and Armavir-Galveston. Two people represented each partnership. In addition one representative from Georgian and one from Armenian MoH attended the conference. Complete list of participants is provided at the end as **annex 1**. Sessions were conducted by the US faculty:

- **Jeanne Trumble, MSW**, Executive Director, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
- **Stephen Dilts, MD, PhD**, President, American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry
- **Nancy Paull, MS**, Executive Director, Stanley Street Treatment and Resources, Inc.

**Description of Event:**

It was a two-day conference dedicated to the various aspects of substance abuse, its prevention, and role of health workers at medical facilities and within their communities. The conference covered several topics such as risk and resilience, the role of health provider in screening, most commonly used

narcotics, substance abuse and mental health, adolescent and family issues, etc. For more complete list of major topics please refer to agenda (**annex 2**). At the end of the second day participants were asked to break into small groups of 2 representing partnerships and elaborate on planning preventive activities in their own communities. This exercise was supposed to help them to think about the problem within their communities, to identify priorities, to think of possible resources, and plan respective activities. Results of this exercise are presented in **annex 3**. At the very end participants completed evaluation forms that are aggregated in **annex 4**.

**Outcomes:**

The conference improved participants understanding of SA prevention. Participants also gained skills in how to screen risk patients and how to approach prevention and treatment, improve knowledge in family and adolescent issues, get acquainted with most common narcotics and notion of dual diagnosis. Certificates of participation were awarded to all participants. Workshop evaluation was highly positive (**annex 4**).

## ANNEXES

### **Annex 1 - Participant List**

#### **Akhvlediani Anna**

Physician Psychologist,  
Women's Wellness Center, Kutaisi, Georgia  
Kutaisi-Atlanta Partnership

#### **Aleksanyan Aram**

Republican Psychiatric Hospital  
Sevan, Gegargunik District, Armenia  
Gegargunik-Providence Partnership

#### **Bablumyan Yuri**

Director, Regional Health Care Department  
Lori Marz, Vanadzor-Armenia  
Lori-Los Angeles Partnership

#### **Brachuli Mariam**

Substance Abuse Specialist,  
Substance Abuse Center, Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region  
Jinvali, Dusheti District, Georgia  
Mtskheta-Milwaukee Partnership

#### **Chachava Tamara**

Chief Specialist  
National Center for Disease Control  
Tbilisi, Georgia  
Tbilisi-Minneapolis Partnership

#### **Danelia Maka**

Instructor  
National Health Management Center  
Tbilisi, Georgia  
Tbilisi-Scranton Partnership

#### **Esayan Elza**

Physician therapist, Sevan Polyclinic for Adults  
Sevan, Armenia  
Gegargunik-Providence Partnership

#### **Gamlkelidze Kako**

Deputy Chairman  
Public Health Department  
Tbilisi, Georgia

**Gogashvili Maia**

Coordinator, Continuous Nursing Education  
Continuous Nursing Education  
National Health Management Center  
Tbilisi-Scranton Partnership

**Harutyunyan Emma**

Obstetrician-gynecologist  
ARMA Medical Center  
Yerevan, Armenia  
Yerevan-Los Angeles Partnership

**Karapetyan Liliya**

Laboratory Specialist  
Medical Center Erebouni  
Yerevan, Armenia  
Yerevan-Los Angeles Partnership

**Khanoyan Violetta**

Physician-psychiatrist, Substance Abuse Specialist  
Matsamor district Polyclinic  
Armavir District, Armenia  
Armavir-Galveston Partnership

**Lomashvili Khatuna**

Mtskheta PHC Center Physician  
Mtskheta, Georgia  
Mtskheta-Milwaukee Partnership

**Muradyan Hasmik**

Physician-therapist  
Armavir Polyclinic, Armavir, Armenia  
Armavir-Galveston Partnership

**Pkhakadze Mariam**

Obstetrician-gynecologist  
Women's Wellness Center, Kutaisi, Georgia  
Kutaisi-Atlanta Partnership

**Simonyan Karine**

Chief Specialist  
Medical Services management Center  
Ministry of Health of Armenia  
Yerevan, Armenia



## **Annex 3 - Planning of Preventive Activities in Communities**

### **Partnership: Yerevan-LA**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Involvement of media to make community aware of problem
- Work with each family separately
- Early screening of patients with addiction problems

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- Single ethnic group that speaks same language

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- Adolescents
- Age group 18-25
- 25 and up
- Women of reproductive age

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- I would educate and update my colleagues on things that I learned here
- Would try to establish a working group on addiction problems

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Financing of respective activities
- Possible resistance from suppliers and distributors

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Director of the "Erebuni" medical center
- Chief people from the MoH and Ministry of Interior

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Organize leisure of adolescents
- Healthy lifestyle and health promotion issues

## **Partnership: Armavir-Galveston**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- We want to work on smoking and alcohol abuse issues

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- Single ethnic group live in our community, Armenians

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- Age group 8-14
- Age group 14-17
- 18-25
- 25 and up

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Will tell colleagues about this conference and update them on the issues it covered

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- I think it wont be easy to screen patients with addiction problems

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Colleagues from the medical field and also teachers
- People from the Ministry of Interior

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Various educational activities though local media

## **MoH Georgia**

### **Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Training of PHC workers on the issues of SA prevention, especially drugs, in primary care setting

### **Please provide with description of your community:**

- Community has a medical background, however, not well oriented in SA prevention issues

### **Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- We would like to target various age groups within community, however, initially work with PHC workers to educate them on importance and necessity of preventive activities at their level

### **Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Adoption and realization of conference materials
- Creation of working group

### **Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Financial and technical capacities
- To reach remote places

### **Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Physicians who specialize in SA
- Psychologists and Sociologists

### **Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Justified and rational approach to population in order to screen and prevent SA

## **Partnership: Mtskheta-Mtianeti-Milwaukee**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- We want to design and implement activities that target smoking and drug abuse

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- Community that respects traditional values

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- Adolescents and people up to 30

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Forming of the working group
- Elaborate on relevant plan of action

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Not enough resources and lack of financing
- Low support from community itself

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- People who are respected within community, they may come from different background
- Volunteers who have had experienced similar problems in the past and passed through it

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Indifference (not really caring about what's going on out there) that became common more recently in our community

## **Partnership: Kutaisi-Atlanta**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Smoking and alcohol use among adolescents and pregnant women

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- Community is more traditional in its way, but sees no or little problem in smoking and some drinking

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- Pregnant women
- Adolescent

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Draft working paper on smoking prevention
- Start preventive measures against smoking

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Implement theoretical knowledge in practice
- Financing might be a pretty much of a barrier too

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Our Women's Wellness Center staff
- NGOs that work in respective field

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Indifference and tolerance to bad things that happen within community

## **Partnership: Tbilisi-Scranton**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Teach physicians and nurses from the PHC setting how to screen problem patients, risk groups, and how to carry out preventive activities

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- With medical background

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- All age groups

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Development of workplan and various educational materials
- Seek organizations that are interested in collaboration

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Not enough funds to develop and print out educational materials and/or conduct trainings

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Physicians with SA profile, sociologists and psychiatrist

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

## **Partnership: Geghargunik-Providence**

### **Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Preventive/educational work in schools
- Cooperate with mass media to highlight some of the most important issues in SA prevention

### **Please provide with description of your community:**

- About 40% of population have highest education; there are 3 specialized sport-schools, and 1 university

### **Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- We want to involve in our work schools, churches, health and social workers, local administration officials, etc

### **Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- To educate population about the problem through media
- Screening of patients with SA problems

### **Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- Social and economic problems, national mentality and indifference of population to SA problems

### **Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Medical workers, NGO's, AIHA, MSF, others

### **Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Try to influence indifference to make sure that community understand the problem and becomes participative

## **Partnership: Lori-LA**

**Please describe preventive activities you want to implement:**

- Educational work with medical workers as well as community
- Involve mass media

**Please provide with description of your community:**

- City of Vanadzor, with 117,000 population

**Please describe groups within your community that you would like to work with:**

- Adolescents and students

**Please list first 2 steps you would undertake when you are back home:**

- Form the working group
- Elaborate on priorities and strategies

**Please tell us about possible barriers:**

- To find enough resources/finances to carry out all activities

**Please tell us about people from your community who could help you:**

- Mayor's office could help
- Medical society of our city

**Please list the cultural issues that you will need to address:**

- Make educational level higher

## Evaluation of the Workshop Sessions

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<b>Please rate the following:</b>	<b><u>5=excellent</u></b>
Opening and overview	4.6
Module 1, Introduction	4.5
Module 2, Risk and Resilience	4.6
Module 7, Review of Most Common Narcotics	4.4
Module 3, The Role of Health Provider in Screening	4.7
Module 4, Primary Care Setting	4.7
Module 8, Addiction and Mental Health	4.7
Module 5, Family and Adolescent Issues	4.8
Module 6, Community Involvement and Development of Workplan	4.7

## Conference Logistics

<b><u>Please rate the following:</u></b>	<b><u>5=excellent</u></b>
Conference meeting rooms	4.5
Hotel Accommodations	4.7
Hotel food	4.7
Registration Process	4.5
Interpreters	4.6
Airport pick-up and delivery to hotel	4.5
AIHA staff	4.7
Hotel staff	4.5
Travel arrangements	4.5

## A few extra questions:

**Representation by country: 9 from Armenia and 8 from Georgia**

## What did you like most about the workshop?

- I liked most of it, especially content and friendly setting
- The topic was relevant indeed
- The way it was conducted, informal and useful
- We gained not only theoretical but also very specific knowledge that is applicable in practice. It would allow us to start working in necessary directions
- Presentations and very knowledgeable facilitators
- Facilitators were great, helping to make up very friendly working atmosphere

- Organization was a forte
- Professionalism
- Participants and Facilitators
- Faculty was well prepared
- Wide spectrum of relevant information, many practical cases, materials useful. All that would be helpful in our future work
- Materials that were provided
- It was interactive with interesting discussions
- Family and adolescent issues

**Was there anything that you did not like about the workshop?**

- 2 days is too short time to cover all related issues in details
- Timing of the Conference wasn't good
- Too short
- 2 days not enough
- Short
- 2 days is really not enough to discuss all aspects of such a huge problem

**What are your thoughts regarding content of the workshop?**

- Content was relevant and up to the point
- Very relevant
- Relevant
- Very interesting and useful
- Practical to our reality
- Content was relevant
- No doubt that content was relevant
- Relevant
- Very interesting
- Relevant
- Topic and content both were relevant for our country

**Do you have any suggestions for AIHA to improve future workshops?**

- To conduct similar events not only in Georgia but in Armenia too
- Conduct them in Armenia as well
- I think it would have been great if at the end participants were provided with visual materials such as posters for instance
- More emphasis on practical aspects of SA prevention
- To expand days of the conference to at least 3
- It probably makes sense to conduct this kind of conference in places where one could observe in practice how various issues are addressed
- More days would allow to go deep into the details
- Organize more similar conferences for PHC workers
- Allocate more time to cover topic in more detail