

PASHA

Newsletter

VOL. 1, 2006

PASHA Updates

by Nima Gharavi, PhD

The Persian American Society for Healthcare Advancement (PASHA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting healthcare and health education in the Iranian community. Founded in 2004 by students at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, in conjunction with Dr. Mohamad Navab, professor of Cardiology at UCLA, PASHA's mission has been aimed at making the Iranian community healthier.

The organization's goals include the following: (1) to provide outreach to the Iranian community /locally/ through educational programs, local clinics, and health awareness campaigns; (2) to provide outreach to the Iranian community /abroad/ through...

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Highlight on a Hero

Taraneh R. Salke

TARANEH SALKE:

Reproductive Health In the Middle East

Interviewed by Maral Farsi, MPH



When asking Taraneh R. Salke why she does the work she does, she responds, "I guess it's just luck that I can help people with the work I love to do." Salke's dedication takes not only passion, but also conviction and intelligence.

Salke started working on health related issues in the Middle East in 1999 and in January of 2005 founded Family Health Alliance, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that focuses on women's and reproductive health in the Middle East. Since 2005 she has implemented a number of projects in Afghanistan and Iran. Family

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Smoking: Is it Worth the Cost?

by Taraneh Paravar

We can easily say that cigarette smoking is a common pastime in the Iranian culture. We remember those “mehmoonis” (house parties) when several of the men or women would go outside to talk and would smoke as they did so. The cigarette was an excuse to go outside, get some fresh air, and discuss the frustrations and happenings of the day. Because many of our friends and family may smoke, we may not pay attention to the fact that each cigarette ages us and puts us at risk of a diverse number of illnesses.

In addition to increased death rates, smokers generally suffer from more illnesses than nonsmokers. Smokers have increased risk of cardiovascular diseases including heart attack and stroke. Smokers have a greater than two-fold increased risk of heart attack and stroke than non-smokers.

Smokers also have a greatly increased risk of lung cancer. Those who smoke 40 cigarettes each day have twice the risk of lung cancer than those who smoke 20 cigarettes each day. Those who start smoking before the age of 15 are four times more likely to have lung cancer than those who start after age 25.

Smoking increases the risk of other cancers as well, including pancreatic cancer, cancer of the stomach, mouth, larynx, esophagus, kidney, and cervix.

And we all know about second-hand smoke. Research studies have shown that nonsmoking women living with smoking spouses have almost two times the risk of developing lung cancer than similar women living in smoke-free homes.

With so many health risks that smoking poses, one might wonder what the appeal of it is anyway? After all, most of these statistics are not foreign to any of us. The cost to your health and checkbook far outweigh the minimal pleasure it brings in the form of momentary stress relief, image advancement, or any other excuse one can conjure. Ask your doctor for more details about methods to stop smoking or check out <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/how2quit.htm> for more resources about smoking cessation.

References: UpToDate Online. “ATS guidelines: Cigarette smoking and health.”



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Volunteer and Job Opportunities

Family Health Alliance

Volunteers for work opportunities in Iran and Afghanistan. Perfect for students who are want to learn about reproductive health issues and rights abroad.

Iranian Recovery Center

Volunteers needed to support recovery services for Iranians in Los Angeles and abroad. Great opportunity for individuals interested in learning about Mental Health particularly with providing culturally and linguistically appropriate care.

...cooperation with Iranian medical programs to enhance medical education in Iran and to target important health issues, and to support and contribute to various relief efforts in Iran; (3) to provide education enrichment programs and mentoring opportunities for students interested in the health science professions; and (4) to provide a forum of communication and interaction for medical, dental, and public health students and professionals.

Since its inception, PASHA has implemented several community programs in an effort to achieve its mission. PASHA's Health Education Committee has organized regular bimonthly lectures on important health issues, such as heart disease and cancer, for the local community. These presentations are dictated in Farsi by physicians at UCLA and are without charge.

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Taraneh Salke, second from the right, is seen here training midwives and doctors in Afghanistan.

Health Alliance’s first project was a family planning training program in two clinics in Kabul and within one year expanded into other areas in Afghanistan.

Family Health Alliance’s project in Iran, which began in March/April of this year, reintroduced a technology in Iran, Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA). The MVA technology is used to treat incomplete abortions and is also used for biopsies. Salke’s work in Iran compares the new method of MVA with the current method of dilation and curettage, or D&C. “The MVA is a safer and more efficient method in terms of cost and in terms of being more patient friendly,” Salke says. Although this technology was introduced in Iran in the 1960s and 70s, it is currently not being used. Unsafe abortion is a contributing

factor to maternal mortality in many countries worldwide and is a major public health risk.

An intensive training program was implemented in Tehran and Isfahan where the doctors and midwives were trained in the MVA technology by a volunteer American gynecologist who accompanied Salke to Iran. With the cooperation of Shahid Beheshti Medical University in Tehran, this project is being implemented in three university affiliated public hospitals. The goal of this project is to improve morbidity and mortality rates, which is more prevalent among low income women. Currently women visiting public hospitals with complications due to miscarriages and incomplete abortions are treated with the older method of D&C. Salke notes, “This method uses sharp instruments that could potentially cause uterine perforation and complication, requires general anesthesia, involves overnight stay at the hospital, and is costly. The use of MVA technology is much safer, requires only local anesthesia, has a quicker recovery time, and costs considerably less.”

Salke hopes to expand knowledge of this technology in Iran and the region through introducing the technology at international health conferences that take place in Iran. MVA technology is used widely around the world and is part of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) basic package of health for women.

In Afghanistan, Family Health Alliance is providing clinical training in family planning and STIs to midwives and doctors. Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. This is due to a number of factors such as high fertility and shortage of family planning services.

The objectives for Family Health Alliance’s training program in Afghanistan are to improve knowledge/clinical skills in family planning (particularly IUD insertion), to reduce infections, to enhance detection/treatment of STIs, and to improve education in STIs and HIV prevention. Salke implements these objectives through employing a women’s empowerment model of teaching. This model utilizes a number of women’s empowerment strategies including 1) role modeling by using professional Muslim women trainers from neighboring Iran,



Salke speaks to a group of Afghan midwives and doctors in Farsi/Dari language



Salke (far left) in a rural clinic outside of Kabul.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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PASHA has also established a network of communication and interaction between health students and professionals at UCLA and the greater Los Angeles area. Furthermore, PASHA has created an affiliation with Kaplan Education to provide medical, dental and undergraduate students with greater access to medical teaching tools. More recently, PASHA has also helped develop and write the Health and Fitness section for OC-PC magazine, a monthly magazine based in Orange County, California.

In its future, PASHA looks to expand its outreach programs in serving the Iranian community. Some of PASHA's plans include: translating health information on various diseases and conditions from the NIH website into Farsi for Iranian to access; supporting health programs and hospitals in Iran, such as the Mahak Rehabilitation Center in Tehran; establishing health clinics in rural Iran; and establishing a form of free healthcare for the uninsured Iranian elderly living in the greater Los Angeles area.

As PASHA continues to grow, it will undoubtedly impact the Iranian community in a positive manner. Much of PASHA's growth and success, however, lies heavily upon volunteer participation from the community and funding from its Board of Trustees. For more information on how you can help PASHA and its mission, please contact us at info@pasha4health.org.

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who had overcome similar constraints; 2) developing critical thinking skills by focusing on the status of Afghan women and comparing them with other women in the region; 3) encouraging individual consultations between trainers and trainees to identify and overcome hurdles in completing the program, such as obtaining husbands' permission; 4) fostering teamwork and personal responsibility by involving trainees in solving daily problems during the program

; and 5) overcoming fatalism by promoting women as agents of change and a culture of "it can be done."

Salke works very closely with Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health and collaborates with a number of NGOs active in the area of reproductive health such as International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes International.

Salke is involved in another innovative project, the launching of a male-centered family planning clinic in Afghanistan. Salke emphasizes that "because Afghan women are among the world's most disempowered women, it is important that family planning programs include male education and involvement in order to expand family planning services in Afghanistan."

Breaking through the barrier of being a woman herself and working with individuals in the governments of these mostly Muslim and conservative countries, Salke has encountered a great deal of success in overcoming many barriers.



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