



## NEWSLETTER

# SYRIAN AMERICAN MEDICAL SOCIETY

ISSUE NO. 5

SEPTEMBER 2006

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## President's Message

# SENSE OF OWNERSHIP...



Thabet Alsheikh, M.D.

*L*et me start by congratulating everyone on a very successful SAMS 7<sup>th</sup> annual convention. The most successful by estimation of many..

During the general assembly meeting I asked SAMS members to take ownership of their society. This is the only way to assure a prosperous future for SAMS and a sure strong and rapid growth. While I was walking in the hallways of the hospital I work at, I noticed a big banner that reads "Standard of the Month ... SENSE OF OWNERSHIP". I did not find a better title to summarize my message to you.

A simple review of SAMS short history tells us that it was the sense of ownership that led a small group of physicians to grow the society to the size it has today and to build the image we are all proud of. It is the sense of ownership that made the members of the current and previous board of directors a role model to others with their dedication and commitment. SAMS leadership leads by example. This is a well known fact.

At the end of the general assembly meeting, Dr. Wael Al Ameri committed himself to starting a new SAMS chapter in Michigan and Dr. Hussam Eddin pledged to start another chapter in New Jersey. These two chapters alone are expected to increase SAMS members by probably 20% or even more. If SAMS members in other States show similar commitment we can only imagine the size that SAMS will reach, and the impact it will have in both Syria and the States. Sense of ownership breeds passion, the essential ingredient of any success formula. Passion is contagious and leads to outcomes that exceed all expectations.

Dr. Naim Farhat, current chair of board of governors, was this year's, and the first, recipient of SAMS "Distinguished Service Award" for his outstanding dedication and contributions serving SAMS mission. Every year since he joined SAMS Dr. Farhat demonstrated exemplary efforts spending countless hours treating needy patients in different Syrian hospitals and towns for a period of time that starts before the usual convention starting date and extends days after it ends. His contributions in the field of interventional cardiology are yet to be matched. He single handedly provides the majority of the interventional cardiology procedures during our annual convention implanting and donating hundreds of stents and other equipments.

## SENSE OF OWNERSHIP ... (continued)

Our National Auxiliary Chapter chairwoman, Mrs. Suzanne Sahloul, our Syrian Chapter auxiliary chairwoman, Mrs. Safa Kurdi and their team were able over a short period of time to step up with their activities and achievements to a role model level .

Dr. Basel Atassi, a medical resident, and Dr. Milad Kawas Cale, a medical student have designed a website for Midwest chapter and are working very hard with medical students and colleagues overseas to strengthen our bridges.

These are just examples of SAMS members with a true sense of ownership. I am certain that many other members are as capable and as willing. That's why, once again, I am inviting all of you to take ownership of your society, to show passion and to display pride in being ACTIVE members. If you do so I am certain SAMS will reach the goals we all have for it.

## SAMS SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION SUMMARY

**F**or the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the Syrian American Medical Society held its annual conference in Damascus and other cities in Syria from June 25 to 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

More than 500 physicians participated in this year's conference; among them were about 200 physicians from the US and more than 300 local Syrian physicians.

The conference theme was "Facing Ethical, Administrative & Clinical Challenges", many of the sessions and the speakers focused on the ethical and the administrative challenges that faces us in our practice and affect the delivery of Modern Medicine.

Dr. Aghaid Al-Kutoubi, the Chairman of Radiology Department at the American University in Beirut presented Ibn Nafis Plenary Lecture about "Radiology: past, current and future"

As usual "Health Reform in Syria" session followed the plenary lecture and was as expected informative, exciting and even controversial sometimes. The Minister of Higher Education and representative of the Minister of Health presented the new or planned reforms in their respective Ministries.

More than 100 American and Syrian speakers participated in the scientific program covering more than 239 Clinical lectures, 16 Symposia, 14 workshops and hands on sessions, 6 practical courses and 17 different sessions

in the CME program in 19 different Medical and Dental specialties. For the first time also, the Cleveland Clinic Foundation provided up to 30 hours of CME to our American Physicians. Certificate of Attendance were presented to all attendants.

For the first year there were special sessions and workshops for Syrian Medical Students and more than 100 of them participated enthusiastically. The workshops focused on combining basic research and clinical practice pathway, starting Molecular Research programs and improving the communication, interview and Clinical skills for those who are interested in pursuing American training. Dr. Salwa Al-sheikh, Dean of Damascus Medical School, met with the conference organizing committee and stressed on future cooperation and coordination between the Medical school and SAMS.

**Cleveland Clinic  
Foundation provided  
up to 30 hours of CME  
for American  
Physicians**

In addition to the Syrian American physicians, several guests from the US, UAE and Canada enriched the conference. A Cardiovascular surgical team from Cleveland Clinic Foundation performed Cardiovascular surgeries to needy patients in Homs, a Dental team of faculty and residents from University of Buffalo, school of Dental Medicine, and a Canadian Emergency Medicine team participated in hands-on workshops and managed needy patients in several cities.

Also for the first time and in coordination with our local Syrian Chapter, US physicians volunteered to examine and manage needy patients in underserved areas in Da-

## SAMS SEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION SUMMARY (continued)

mascus. The plan is to expand this program to involve more geographic areas in Syria in the future conferences.

A rich, and sometimes very crowded, social program complemented our scientific one. A variety of tours and social events were held throughout the conference including a musical Opening Ceremony, Orchestra night and was culminated with the Gala Dinner held in Sheraton poolside attended by 450 guests, where a life Achievement Award was presented to Dr. Bourhan Al-Abed, the father of Anesthesiology in Syria and a pioneer in Medical Ethics.

The Auxiliary chapter was very active because of the extraordinary effort of the Syrian local Auxiliary chapter.

The auxiliary program included three public lectures on general medical and ethical topics, an art exhibit was arranged with the participation of many of the best known Syrian painters and sculptures, a cultural night in Kasr Alazm , Arada Shameya in Old Damascus followed by the first fund raising dinner to support local NGOs.

Latakia, Homs, Tartous, Aleppo and Deir Atia had their own mini SAMS conferences. Homs held its first Anti-Smoking walkathon preceded by lectures about the dangers of smoking from medical, ethical and legal perspectives.

Throughout the conference there were excellent media coverage and many networking opportunities among American and local physicians. Joan Pitcher, one of the guest speakers to the conference who lectured about "reducing medical error" was very worried about traveling to Syria especially that her mother warned her about her safety, said after the Auxiliary dinner in Old Damascus: "This is a very beautiful city and the conference was well organized. People are friendly and hospitable, and I feel very happy that I came here. Next year I will make sure that I will come again and bring my mother with me".

Mohammed Zaher Sahloul, M.D., FCCP  
Convention Chairman

## AUXILLIARY CHAPTER

**D**ear SAMS Members:

On behalf of the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) Auxiliary Committee we would like to update you on our activities at 7<sup>th</sup> Annual SAMS convention in June 2006. This year was a unique one for the auxiliary committee. This committee which consists of the physician's spouses was formed in order to help fulfill the humanitarian mission of SAMS. The committee's main mission is to help fundraise for worthy causes in Syria during the annual convention. Another mission of the auxiliary committee is to also provide informative and educational lectures for the general public and we did just that during this year's convention.

The auxiliary program began with the opening of an art show on June 26<sup>th</sup> where guests viewed and purchased art work from famous artists in Syria. The main program consisted of informative medical lectures on the dangers of smoking, sleep disorders, obesity in children, early

detection of cancer, and preventing cardiovascular disease. These lectures were well attended and were given by Board certified Syrian American physicians.

Other lectures that were also well attended were on the Effects of Immigration on the individual and on the community. We heard different points of views on the positive and negative effects of immigration from religious scholars, educators, activists and individual Syrian physicians that immigrated to the United States. The educational lectures were concluded with speeches on the importance of volunteerism and charity work. The main speaker was Dr. Dyala Haj Aref the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor. Dr. Haj Aref spoke to us about the role of charitable organizations in the Syrian society as a bridge between two cultures.

The final event for the auxiliary committee was the first annual fundraising dinner which was held on June 28<sup>th</sup> at the Al-Azam Palace and Maktab Anbar. The dinner was well attended and guests viewed cultural dances and

## AUXILIARY CHAPTER (continued...)

songs that represents old Damascan style. The program was a huge success and the proceeds from this event went towards an NGO, the Syrian Anti-Smoking Society which helps in educating the public on the dangers of smoking and in lobbying public officials to pass laws against smoking in public places. The other worthy organization is the Jameeyat AlBir and Social Services in Hama which is building a free health clinic that serves the poor and indigent in Hama. It is very heart-warming to know that your money that was pledged and collected went towards helping two worthy organizations that are helping those who are in need in Syria.

The auxiliary committee hopes that more member spouses become involved in helping shape this committee in order to fulfill the humanitarian mission of SAMS. This is a young committee so we urge all of you to get involved, to give us your feedback, your suggestions, and most importantly give us your support in attending our events in order to help our communities back home. We thank all of the generous donors who made our fundraising event a successful one. May God bless you and your families always.

Sincerely,  
SAMS National Auxiliary Committee

## SAMS 7TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE “Facing Ethical, Administrative & Clinical Challenges”

**T**he conference focused on delivering state of the art medicine with effective (on the money/budget) delivery of medical services. Medical care was presented as medicine with a human touch and limitations. End of life care and compassion were emphasized.

The conference was broad and inclusive for all specialties, while at the same time it was focused, deep and detailed in each specialty. Practical and every day medical issues for the practicing physician were discussed in extensive detail.

Medicine was discussed as science, an art and service for the society. In addition, health care was discussed as a business with a limited resources and limitations.

In SAMS 7th Annual Conference great emphasis was given for outreach and hands-on sessions. Lectures and side conferences were conducted in multiple locations throughout Syrian Provinces, like Lattakia, Tartous, Aleppo, Homs, and Daer Attia.

One of the conference objectives was teaching what to do, and how to do it. We trained Syrian physicians on Neonatal Resuscitation (NRP), Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), pacemaker implantation and operation, Advanced Trauma Life Support course, including

vascular access, conventional ventilator management, high frequency ventilator management, and chest tube insertion (in animal model-goat). Other courses included airway management course, pulmonary intensive care course, renal dialysis course, gyno-urology course, dental implantation, and sharing expertise in electrophysiology, cardiac catheterization/interventions and carotid artery stenting. Other courses emphasized research start up, planning, and research methodology.

SAMS 7th Annual Conference was a rich experience for all participants and those involved in the conference. The size of the conference and activities were a milestone in SAMS's history. I cannot thank the dedicated faculty enough for spending their time and vacation to deliver the best to our beloved mother home: Syria

Moustafa Aouthmany, M.D.  
Scientific Convention Chairman



Attendees at the Pacing and ICD course at Al Bassel main auditorium

# SAMS RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION

ON BEHALF OF ALL SAMS MEMBERS

SAMS PRESIDENT

RECEIVED THE PRESTIGIOUS

2006 AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CARDIOLOGY

“INTERNATIONAL SERVICE AWARD”

Acknowledging our

“Outstanding Contributions to Enhancing Cardiovascular  
Care and Education Throughout the World”



*Dr. Alsheikh (fourth from the left) with other recipients of 2006 ACC Awards*

## FROM SAMS FRIENDS

Dear Dr.Thabet Alsheikh,

July 1st, 2006

This is just to congratulate you for the successful convention of SAMS held in Damascus during last week. We are all here in Syria proud of our boys, graduates of Damascus University, for their professional success and achievements. All the presentations of your convention were of high quality, diverse and up-to date. They have added a lot to our CME.

I congratulate you personally for the high recognition you' ve received from the American College of Cardiology that reflected not only on you but to your Alma Mater and to your home country, Syria.

Keep up the good work and God bless you.

Best wishes and regards,

Suheil Simaan,MD,FACS  
Professor of Surgery  
Damascus University, Syria

## SAMS CHAPTERS NEWS

## Ohio Chapter

**T**he going number of professional medical societies constantly reminds us, *do we need another society?*

SAMS was founded and organized to fill a void for physicians that clearly wanted to keep their strong ties to their country of origin. After a few years of nation wide activity it became clear that the success of the annual convention in Damascus had exceeded all expectations and the need for more local organizational involvement became rapidly evident.

The Ohio chapter was established on Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2004 with a vision of having a collective voice and a network of physicians from a Syrian background. The Chapter meets quarterly and helps in identifying tools to make local physicians involved in the preparation for the annual convention.

We have always believed that this organization has a promising future, especially in a state like Ohio that has become home to many families of Syrian origin. Today we are proud to say that our database has been growing exponentially.

We are also proud of the results of the first election. Our new President elected May 25<sup>th</sup> 2006 is **Dr. Basel Moussa**. He is a cardiologist practicing in the suburbs of Cleveland's west side where he is very well known and respected by his community and peers. Dr Moussa has always shown leadership and self effacing attitude towards all his endeavors. His clinical contribution during the annual convention was a very valuable component of its success.

Other board members are:

<b>Dr. Firas Raslan</b>	An anesthesiologist from the Cleveland area.
<b>Dr. Razan Abbass</b>	A dentist from the Cleveland area.
<b>Dr. Joseph Shawi</b>	An obstetrician and gynecologist from the Cleveland area.
<b>Dr. Samer Daoud</b>	A dentist from north east Ohio.

Maan Fares, MD  
OH Chapter Past President

## Fund Raising Event “Lebanon Medical Relief”

**I**n an unprecedented joint effort, *SAMS Ohio Chapter* supported a call by *NAAMA Ohio Chapter* and *ACCESS Ohio* for an urgent fund raising event “Lebanon Medical Relief” in Cleveland Ohio on August 11, 2006. Local dignitaries, physicians and business leaders of Arab origin and their families listened to keynote speaker Ambassador Dr. Clovis Maksoud who highlighted the humanitarian catastrophe in the Lebanese war and made the case for the good that can come out of this painful tragedy. This event, with the strong presence of Syrian American physicians, raised \$80,000.

Dr. Bassel Moussa  
Ohio Chapter President

## Upcoming Events

**S***AMS Ohio chapter* is having the annual “*Hafleh*” this fall (Date to be announced later on). It will be a CME event, with a social gathering, and an outreach for member-candidates and resident/fellow physicians of Syrian origin. The *SAMS Recognition Award*, and *Friend of SAMS Award* will be announced.

## Midwest Chapter Auxiliary News

**I**n its first activity for 2006/2007, the Midwest Auxiliary Committee has hosted its first SAMS Midwest all day workshop, on Sunday September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

Mr. Edmund Arroyo, a licensed high school social worker who has worked with Arab families and the Muslim community in the past years presented “Investing in Our Children: The Best 401k”, a workshop on parenting. Many of our SAMS members have been requesting this type of workshop because they all feel that raising children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become a real challenge, so the advice of an experienced specialist will help make the challenge less daunting and more manageable.

The second session of the day was a humanitarian session titled “Hand in Hand for Lebanon Fundraising Campaign” presented by Zakat Foundation. As part of our mission to help fundraising for worthy causes, we felt the need to support our brothers and sisters in Lebanon in the time of crisis. Anyone who wishes to donate for this important cause can log on to Zakat Foundation’s website at [www.zakatfoundation.org](http://www.zakatfoundation.org).

The last part of our day was a workshop for future medical residents, organized by Dr. Bassel Atassi, an active SAMS member and the chairman of the resident committee. The purpose of this workshop was to help teach perspective residents everything they need to succeed from writing their resumes to conducting interviews and much more. The speakers were Dr. Zaher Sahloul and Dr. Mohideen Dia, the current president of the SAMS Midwest Chapter.

The Midwest Auxiliary Committee encourages all SAMS chapters to take the initiative to start local auxiliary committees in order to help support the humanitarian, cultural and educational mission of SAMS.

Thank you,  
Suzanne Akhras  
President of the SAMS Midwest Auxiliary Committee

SAMS 7TH ANNUAL CONVENTION—AWARDS



*Dr. Alsheikh presenting the “Lifetime Achievement Award” for Dr. Bourhan Al-Abed*



*Dr. Naim Farhat (1st from right) receiving the “Distinguished Service Award”.*



*Steve Ryan receiving the “Friend of SAMS Award”*



*Donna Cummings & Medtronics receiving the “Friend of SAMS Award”*



*Mrs. Suzanne Sahloul receiving an Appreciation Award*



*Mrs. Safaa Kurdi receiving an Appreciation Award*



*Mr. Yousif M. Almadfaei, UAE Ambassador receiving an Appreciation Award.*



*Joan Pitcher receiving an Appreciation Award*

SAMS 7TH ANNUAL CONVENTION — SYRIA 2006



*The opening ceremony at Ebla*



*Gala Dinner at Sheraton Hotel*



*Dr. Al Aswad with one of the patients being examined*



*Dr. Farhat with one of the patients*



*Cultural Dances performed at Al-Azam Palace at the Auxiliary Dinner*



*Registration site at Al Basil Hospital*



*Traditional Folklore at Maktab Anbar*



*The Art Exhibit at the Auxiliary Dinner in Maktab Anbar*

**SAMS 7TH ANNUAL CONVENTION  
PARTICIPANTS IN MEDICAL EXHIBITION**

*SAMS would like to thank the following companies for being part of  
the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention Medical Exhibit*

*Syrian American Medical Group*

*Pfizer Co.*

*Unipharma Co.*

*Alpha Co.*

*Domina Co.*

*Julphar Co.*

*Al Andalus University*

*Kasbar & Shabbani Co.*

*Al Watania*

*Bahri Co.*

*Asia Co.*

*SAMG Co.*

*Al Saad Co.*

*Qalamoun University*

*Special Thanks to*

*“Al Multaka”*

*the organizing company*

*for the superb job*

**RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2007****MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Academic Title (If any) : \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Dues: National Dues \$100 Chapter Dues (specify which chapter) \$50

_____ Illiana	_____ Ohio	_____ Eastern
_____ Western	_____ Central	_____ Canadian

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

 Auxiliary Chapter \$50

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Method: Check: \_\_\_\_\_ (Check Number)

Credit Card:

 Visa  Master Card

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (MM/YY)

Print Authorized name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(as it appears on credit card)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Send the application to:  
 Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS)  
 P.O. Box 1015  
 Canfield, OH 44406

To register by fax, please fax application to:  
 Fax: (330) 286-0325

*MARK YOUR CALENDER*

*JUNE 2007*

*24th—28th*

*SAMS 8th ANNUAL CONVENTION*

*Visit us on the Web*  
*[www.sams-usa.net](http://www.sams-usa.net)*