



*July 1<sup>st</sup> through  
December 31<sup>st</sup> 2011*

# Newsletter

*Volume 1, Issue 1*

## *Albanian American Medical Society*

### ***Special Interest Articles:***

- Honorary Member Induction
- Ambassador Program
- Albanian Health Fair

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Dr. Lindita Çoku lecturing at the Medical School of Tetova State University, Macedonia



Society Members at the AAMS First Gala Event  
March 19, 2011 Harvard Club New York, NY

## **2011 Highlights**

Happy New Year wishes from the Albanian American Medical Society. The beginning of the 2011 calendar year for AAMS was marked with an exciting trip to Macedonia and shortly after with the first AAMS Gala event. On March 3-4, 2011, local Albanian physicians in Macedonia and the Minister of Health, Dr. Bujar Osmani, greeted President of AAMS, Dr. Lindita Çoku and society member, Physician Assistant Sihana Sela. The successful trip fulfilled many of the society's objectives including fostering a network of physicians in the Albanian community abroad, educational lectures for the medical staff and students, and providing the Albanian medical community in Macedonia with a link to American observerships and other opportunities.

Upon return from the Macedonia trip, AAMS hosted the first Gala event on March 19, 2011 at the Harvard Club, New York City. After welcoming remarks from President Dr. Lindita Çoku and Co-Chairman Dr. Sulejman Çelaj, Honorary Chairman and 1998 Nobel Laureate in Medicine & Physiology, Dr. Ferid Murad, presented Dr. Agim Leka with the Lifetime Achievement Award. The honored guests were Dr. Peter W. Carmel, the President of the American Medical Association, and Dr. Jaime R. Torres, New York Regional Director of US Department of Health and Human Services. The celebration of the Albanian American medical community at the gala was concluded with traditional music and dancing.

## **Meet the Board of Directors/ Steering Committee**

On July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, the newly elected members of the Board of Directors and Steering Committee for the 2011-2013 term of service were announced as follows:

### **Board of Directors:**

President: Lindita Çoku, MD  
Co-Chairman: Ferdinand Matanaj, MD  
Co-Chairman: Sulejman Çelaj, MD  
Executive Director: Skender Murtezani, MD

### **Steering Committee:**

Education: Edlira Duro, MD  
Treasurer: Kristina Dabovic, PharmD  
Newsletter Editor: Sihana Sela, PA  
Student Advisor: Fatos Rugova, MD



Dr. Xhevat Sinanaj, Dr. Lindita Çoku,  
Dr. Sulejman Çelaj (left to right)  
Cofounders of AAMS July 20, 2008  
Boston, Massachusetts

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*"Success for our  
members is also  
success for our  
country."*



Dr. Bashkim Kadriu presenting his research

## AAMS 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary

The Albanian American Medical Society celebrated its 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary on July 23, 2011 at Giovanni's restaurant in Bronx, NY. Moderator for the event, Physician Assistant Sihana Sela, invited Dr. Selahedin Velaj, PhD to raise the society's flag for the first time. Dr. Velaj, a 90-year-old Albanian American from Vlora, was presented with the Senior Membership Certificate on behalf of his son, Dr. Richard Velaj (Drini), a Harvard trained neuroradiologist, who lost his life in a tragic accident on October 14, 2010.

Honored guests at this event were Dr. Edward H. Oruçi, first generation Albanian-American and interventional cardiologist at St. Francis Hospital, Roslyn, New York; and Dr. Lydra Tapija, an Albanian-American dentist, leading her private practice in Bronx, New York.

Welcoming remarks were offered by Dr. Lindita Çoku, stating "success for our members is also a success for our country". Dr. Çoku referenced an article, "Serious Reportable Events: transparency, accountability critical to reducing medical errors and harm". The emphasis was placed on the cost of medical mistakes and the need of accountability by those responsible, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, etc.

Three additional new members of the society were presented with membership Certificates: Matilda Haxhari, dental clinic office manager in New York, graduate with Bachelor's Degree in Biology from St. John's University, and aspirations of becoming a dentist; Kledia Myrtolli, graduate from Yale University with Bachelor Intensive Degree in biology, currently second year medical student pursuing an MD at New York Medical College; and Ershela Duresi, graduate of Yale University with Masters in biology and currently a second year medical student pursuing an MD/PhD at Harvard School of Medicine.

Dr. Sulejman Çelaj, MD, co-chairman of the society, reviewed the historical milestones of AAMS. He also described the events organized and initiated by AAMS including donations presented by Dr. Ismet Lukolic at the Prishtina University Medical Center; "Dinner with a Doctor" at St. Barnabas Hospital for the Albanian Community led by Dr. Çelaj; an Albanian Health Fair held in Hartsdale, NY at Our Lady of Shkodra Church; and continuous pro-bono work the society offers to Albanian immigrant patients. Dr. Çelaj also reviewed plans for future programs including the Illyrian Heart Program in the Albanian territories of the Balkan Peninsula providing prevention, intervention, and intensive care of cardiac illnesses.

Dr. Bashkim Kadriu, presented his research project, completed at the College of Medicine at Chicago, titled "Anticonvulsant and neuroprotective properties of imidazo-benzodiazepine drugs against status epilepticus and neuronal damage". Dr. Kadriu studied at the University of Prishtina and has currently joined Albert Einstein's University of Yeshiva in Bronx, NY.

Celebration and festivities continued with networking amongst the members.

## Ambassador Program

As part of the AAMS mission, the society continues to support fellow colleagues from the homeland to hone their clinical skills for short periods of time in centers of excellence in the US. The second physician to participate in the Ambassador Program, Dr. Afrim Halimi, is an Albanian radiologist from Gostivar, Macedonia. He was trained at the Radiology Department of Montefiore Medical Center and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in NY for 3 months. The successful observership was made possible through coordination between AAMS and Dr. Nogah Haramati, Chief of Radiology, Professor Clinical Radiology and Surgery, Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center.

**Montefiore**  
THE UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

**EINSTEIN**  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
of Yeshiva University

December 14, 2011

Lindita Çoku, M.D.  
President/Co-Founder  
Albanian American Medical Society  
58 East Springfield Street, Suite 2  
Boston, MA 02118

**Re: Afrim Halimi, M.D.**  
Chief of Radiology  
Genrel Hospital 'Ferid Murad'  
1230 Gostivar  
Macedonia

Dear Dr. Çoku:

Dr. Afrim Halimi was an emissary of the Albanian American Medical Society to the Department of Radiology at Montefiore Medical Center and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY USA from 12 September 2011 through 12 December 2011.

During this time, Dr. Afrim Halimi diligently applied himself to studying and learning the cross sectional imaging techniques and disorders of abdominal/pelvic radiology, neuroradiology, musculoskeletal radiology and non-invasive vascular imaging focusing primarily on CT and MR.

Having Dr. Afrim Halimi in our department was a true pleasure. Dr. Halimi is not only an extremely gifted physician with an impressive fund of knowledge and finely honed diagnostic skills. He is also an extremely personable individual and an outstanding ambassador of the Albanian and Macedonian Medical Community.

We have greatly enjoyed the privilege of sharing knowledge with Dr. Halimi, and congratulate the Albanian American Medical Society for the opportunity to participate in this wonderful program, and allowing us to also learn from Dr. Afrim Halimi.

Sincerely,

Nogah Haramati, M.D.  
Chief of Radiology  
Professor, Clinical Radiology & Surgery  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
Montefiore Medical Center  
Bronx, NY  
USA



*Dr. Afrim Halimi (center), Dr. Lindita Çoku (right), Shana Sela PA (left)*

*Honorary Chairman*  
Ferid Murad, MD, PhD

*Honorary Members*  
Agim Leka, MD

Anna Kohen, DDS

Philip Çausaj, MD

Peter Pochi, MD

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*"There are numerous emails that are received from individuals who appreciate the existence of our medical society here in the United States"*



*Society new members presenting the AAMS flag*

## Annual Report from AAMS External Communication Coordinator

Irida Hasalla, MD, Chief Medical Resident at St. Barnabas Hospital in NY, manages the electronic correspondence for AAMS (e-mail address: [info@albamedsociety.org](mailto:info@albamedsociety.org)) from 7/01/2011 to present. During this period of time, AAMS has received numerous e-mails. The vast majority of them are sent from students from Albania, Kosova, and Macedonia that have finished medical school and want to get more information about entering residency programs in the United States. Each email receives correspondence about the exams that they have to take and the importance of the scores on these exams as a key to open doors for future residency applications.

Another group of e-mails has been sent from individuals asking for assistance, financial or medical, to whom, with the help of AAMS president we have replied accordingly within our limited possibilities as a newly formed society with modest funds, but with a great arsenal of Albanian medical personnel assistance. To mention one of them, the case of an Albanian patient suffering from glaucoma that we referred to Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, and to go the extra mile, Dr. Çoku also supplied him with special glaucoma glasses.

The society also received e-mails regarding employment opportunities from US clinics wanting to hire Albanian speaking physicians and from American physicians interested in working in Albanian inhabited territories. These requests were made available to all AAMS members in the hope that someone might be interested.

To mention last, but not least, are the numerous e-mails that are received from individuals who appreciate the existence of our medical society here in the United States. They have also expressed their desire to be part of the society and AAMS has welcomed them with open arms.

## AAMS Members

### Active Members

Renewals	59
New	22
<b>Total:</b>	<b>81</b>

### Professionals

Dentist	4
Medical Doctor	48
Physician Assistant	3
Pharmacists	6
Nurse	3
Public Health	1
Research/ Scientist	2
Social Worker	1
Technician	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>69</b>

### Students

Dental	1
Medical	8
Pharmacy	1
Research/ Scientist	1
Technician	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>12</b>

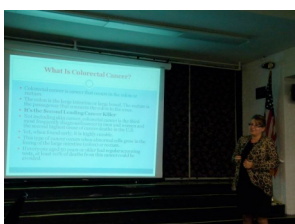
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*"The society receives emails regarding employment opportunities from US clinics wanting to hire Albanian speaking physicians"*

The membership funds from 2011 amount to a total of \$5,620.



*"The Healthy Bronx Initiative partnered with the Albanian Medical Society to host a successful and informative community health event for Albanians."*



## Donations

In September 2011 AAMS facilitated the transportation of surgical equipment in the value of \$46,000. This was donated by a private hospital in Boston to the orthopedic department of a military hospital in Tirana.

## Albanian Health Fair

On Saturday, October 15, 2011, the Healthy Bronx Initiative partnered with the Albanian American Medical Society to host a successful and informative community health event for Albanians at the Bronx House.

The event, co-sponsored by St. Barnabas Hospital and Committee of Interns and Residents, featured five medical professionals presenting in Albanian and English, the symptoms, preventative measures, and treatment options for diseases prevalent within the community including, diabetes, asthma, hypertension, depression, and cancer. Each presentation was followed by a "question and answer" session. The participants that attended also had the opportunity to collect information and speak individually with the doctors between presentations.

Speakers included: Dr. Merita Shehu; Sihana Sela, Physician Assistant; Dr. Irida Hasalla; Dr. Bashkim Kadriu; Dr. Elizabeth Lulaj; Dr. Zana Nikolla; and Dr. Ismet Lukolic, serving as moderator of the event.



*Albanian Health Event Speakers (left to right): Dr. Zana Nikolla, Dr. Bashkim Kadriu, Dr. Irida Hasalla, Dr. Ismet Lukolic, PA Sihana Sela, Dr. Merita Shehu, Dr. Elizabeth Lulaj*

## Honorary Member Induction

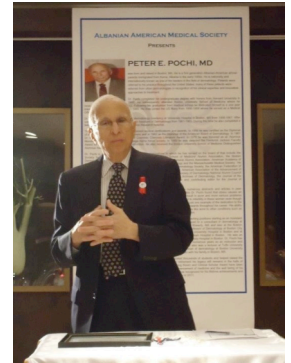
The Albanian American Medical Society celebrated the induction of Dr. Peter E. Pochi as an Honorary Member. Dr. Pochi, a first-generation Albanian-American, completed his undergraduate studies with honors from Harvard University in 1950 and subsequently obtained a medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine in 1955. After completion of a one-year internship at Boston City Hospital and a two-year service as a Medical Officer in the US Navy from 1956-1958, Dr. Pochi attended dermatology residency at University Hospital in Boston, MA, from 1958-1961.

Among the numerous honors and awards Dr. Pochi has received throughout his career, as well as memberships in several medical organizations, including the status of Fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology and the Massachusetts Medical Society, Dr. Pochi has also produced over 150 publications in peer-reviewed journals. Upon his retirement, Dr. Pochi also donated his entire medical library to the dermatology department of Tirana University School of Medicine.

A world-renowned leader in the field of dermatology, an educator, and a determined clinician, Dr. Pochi was once again honored through AAMS. He received his honorary member certificate on November 19, 2011.

Dr. Pochi expressed the continued need of physicians in the United States observed by the dramatic increase in the number of medical school graduates. He also stressed the importance of annual dermatologic screening especially for early detection and early treatment melanoma.

Members of AAMS shared their pride for such a talented professional to be associated with the society. The induction ceremony concluded with a question answer forum with Dr. Pochi.



*Honorary Member Induction of Dr. Peter E Pochi and AAMS Members  
November 19, 2011*





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**We're on the Web!**

*See us at:*

[www.albamedsociety.org](http://www.albamedsociety.org)

Add us on facebook at:

Albanian American Medical Society

## End of Year Meeting

The Orientation Room in McKinney Building of the Boston Public Library served as the location of the End of Year Annual Albanian American Medical Society Meeting on December 4, 2011.

Members that were present in person and via electronic communication means discussed the society's role in identifying, recognizing and alerting Medical Schools in Tirana, Albania; Prishtina, Kosova; and Tetova, Macedonia to anticipate and prepare for new future regulations from the Educational Committee of Foreign Medical Graduates. Dr. Edlira Duro has been appointed as a liaison between the AAMS and the respective medical institutions to help facilitate communication to ensure these institutions are aware of the upcoming changes.

Also on the forum for discussion was the duty and obligation of the medical society to help mentor upcoming health professionals applying for USMLE steps or currently in medical school looking to integrate into the United States medical system. AAMS has built a partnership with Kaplan Test Prep to obtain discounts in which interested members would be entitled.

AAMS End of Year Meeting concluded with a sense of continued hard work and dedication from all members, as well as an upcoming year of increased productivity and identification of the needs of the Albanian-American community in the US and abroad.



*End of Year Meeting, Boston Public Library  
December 4, 2011*

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Medical Society*

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### *About Our Organization...*

AAMS is acknowledged by the American Medical Association as an Ethnic Medical Association and is listed in its directory as such an organization in the USA.

AAMS is granted the 501(c) 3 status as tax exempt and a public charity organization under Internal Revenue Code.

***Albanian American Medical Society  
Wishes you and your family a Happy and Healthy 2012!***