

THE HELLENIC LINK, Inc

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ Member Update - BULLETIN



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Christmas 2009

Continuing the Outreach on Wellness and Healthy Ageing

(In the Spirit of Christmas):

The team of clinical experts (Dr. Andreas Adams and R.N. Ms. Angela Floratos), whom we introduced to the HL members and readers of the *Bulletin* in the October-November issue (#82), paid another visit to the Senior Center of St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church of Jamaica, NY on November 24, 2009 in order to present a second seminar-workshop, this time on “**Geriatric Depression.**” The theme is quite appropriate for the holiday season – between Thanksgiving and New Year’s. It is during this time that many older individuals think of past holiday festivities with former family members, friends and neighbors. Some of these individuals may have died or adult children may be living with their own families in other distant geographic locations. The latter phenomenon is referred as the “**empty nest syndrome.**” A lady at the facility commented that she can still visualize her children and other family members in her empty house. The clinicians said that such thoughts and feelings can be appropriate during these times and may not indicate the start or presence of geriatric depression,

The talk began with a clear and concise description of the features of clinical depression (i.e., weight change, sleep disturbance, feelings of worthlessness, loss of energy, self-destructive thoughts), lasting several weeks, and the way(s) many older adults express these features as physical complaints (headaches, dizzy spells, cramps, fatigue). Then both visiting clinicians clarified the question who is the appropriate clinical counselor to be seen when an older adult may be suffering from one or more episodes of clinical geriatric depression. They also pointed out the weaknesses and shortfalls of being treated by a “regular

internist” for this condition. It is well known in many clinical- medical circles that primary care providers may lack the training and education to properly diagnose and treat an older individual who is clinically depressed. And for too long now, going to a mental health specialist for any level of emotional problem frequently carries a great stigma in the Greek American community.

The discussion also cited suicide as an outcome of clinical- geriatric depression. It is an established fact, suicide risk is most closely related to the degree of hopelessness (another trait of depression)) one is experiencing. And every mental practitioner should ask his/her client- patient about suicidal thoughts and intent.

The reactions of the meeting participants at the Senior Center to the program were quite interesting. It appears that they are quite resilient, given their losses (retirement, decline in health, decrease of income, widowhood, other external changes). Research indicates that individuals who are rooted in religious/spiritual communities (in our case, the Greek Orthodox Church) and have support systems (the other individuals of the Senior Center, Greek neighbors/friends) can cope better with clinical- geriatric depression and losses, maintain their wellness and age well. But a poor diet, heavy in starch/sugar, saturated fats, excessive use of nicotine/alcohol, and a lack of physical/mental exercise can offset healthy longevity. There were many questions asked and the seniors expressed satisfaction for the informative discussion and guidance they received. Dr. Adams and Ms. Floratos were invited to return to the Center for another session on wellness and healthy ageing. There was agreement for a renewal of the program in the New Year.

We wish to reiterate the value of such outreach programs extended to communities of seniors and that the Hellenic Link gladly will convey to our two socially outreaching friends requests for availing kindly themselves to similar health promoting events for the benefit of seniors in Greek community cultural centers. To obtain relevant information and express interest call: (718) 217-4285.

Christmas Greetings Received from Members

It is heartwarming, especially during Christmas time, to be able to reconnect with relatives and friends residing in far away places via a Christmas Letter highlighting the experiences of the past year. It is a sort of reunion that renews and updates bonds of friendship. This tradition of Christmas- letter writing is of particular value to our Association, the Hellenic Link, the members of which are not concentrated as is known in one geographical area. We do get such letters from members in distant places and we would like to circulate them among all members using the Bulletin as a medium. Unfortunately, this is not feasible due to writing- space limitations. We can, however, present one letter, at least, that does reflect the professional and family endeavors and

experiences of one Hellenic Link member in the past year. In this context, we are happy to make our members aware of the lively Christmas Greetings we received from fellow-member Dr. Dimitrios Oreopoulos* :

CHRISTMAS 2009

TO ALL OUR FRIENDS:

Dear friends,

I wrote this Christmas letter on the airplane as I came back from Edmonton to Toronto. I was in Edmonton to give two lectures and I took the opportunity to spend a few days with my daughter Antigone who lives there and at present is completing her PhD in clinical epidemiology.

In the last week of August and first of September Antigone and I enjoyed two weeks in Greece. We had an exciting time in Athens – Thessaloniki and Alexandroupolis where she met her cousins. We spent the last week in the beautiful island of Kythera where we have been invited every two years for the last 12 years. It was nice to see Antigone enjoying for the first time famous Greek hospitality from relatives and non-relatives.

Nancy missed her visit to Kythera this year but was compensated with one week's visit to London, England and welcomed the chance to experience the land of her ancestors. She liked the visit and believes she would like to live there if she had the chance. A little late for that but we may be able to go back again. After London we spent one week in Vicenza, Italy, where I participated at the Peritoneal Dialysis Course, organized by Dr. C. Ronco. In October Nancy and I went back to Greece to the city of Ioannina where I received an honorary degree from the Medical School of that city. This was a particularly touching experience for me because my brother Lukas practiced medicine there in the 1960's and, as a medical student, I spent my summers with him. I based my acceptance remarks on a paper Lukas had written on the meaning of suffering.

I have been blessed to be able to continue working, seeing patients (three clinics a week). I work a good 12 hours a day and enjoy every moment of it. I still edit the journal, International Urology and Nephrology, whose impact factor doubled (0.54 → 0.92) this year. It is an exciting experience to build up a journal from zero for a second time in my lifetime. However I find even more exciting the promotion of Geriatric Nephrology by the American Society of Nephrology (ASN). For a second year we had a successful two-day course on Geriatric Nephrology at the ASN's Renal Week. In addition the ASN Council has agreed to establish an Advisory Board on issues in Geriatric Nephrology and have been asked to chair it. In the meantime the 8th Annual Conference on Prevention in Renal Disease this year attracted 350 registrants. We plan to hold the 9th Conference in October 2010 but unfortunately have lost one of our major donors and are praying that other donors will come forward. In the meantime, we will plan for a leaner conference.

Nancy enjoys the time she spends with her three grandchildren and she makes herself available to help in any way she can. At the same time she looks after Pete, our dog for the last nine years, but also we have acquired Windsor, a second dog of the same breed, who is only two and one-half years old. It is a great pleasure having them around.

George works hard as a busy vascular surgeon and Amrit is back working as a Nephrologist but spends as much time as she can with their two children Dimitrios and Costas. Dimitrios is a clever and polite five and a one-half year old, while Costas is now two years old and is starting to talk.

After a trial in Vancouver, Philip and Marcella and Lukas, who is now one year old, have decided to live in Toronto to our great pleasure. Marcella is back at work and Philip continues his exciting research on Economics of Education. Fortunately they have found a good nanny for Lukas.

John is completing his PhD and has decided to work in Industry. Fortunately he found a company devoted to the manufacture of microscopes here in Toronto and already has had an offer to work with them. Michelle completed her medicine degree and is now training in family medicine in one of the Toronto hospitals. They both enjoy taking care of Mr. Butternut, a nice dog they adopted from the Humane Society.

As we enjoy our blessings we think often of those less fortunate, those who suffer from disease, poverty and war. We all must try to make it a better place in any way we can. Many small acts of kindness towards others and towards our environment will bring change.

We cherish our friends and friendships and the opportunity of communicating with all of you throughout the year.

We pray that you and your families will have a healthy, happy and fulfilling time during this Christmas season and the New Year.

With all our love, The Oreopoulos Family

Along with our sincere thanks, on behalf of the Hellenic Link members, we also wish Dimitrios, Nancy, and their extended family a Blessed Christmas in the warmth of their togetherness, and good health, prosperity and success in their professional and family pursuits in 2010 and beyond. Naturally, we are extending these wishes to every member of the Hellenic Link and his/her loved ones

Christos Mantzoros Promoted to Full Professorship at Harvard

We are happy to inform our members that our friend Dr. Christos Mantzoros has ascended in rank to full Professor at the Medical School of Harvard University. As explained by a knowledgeable colleague, Dr. Mantzoros “has built an outstanding clinical and translational research program. He has carried out seminal studies of **leptin biology** in humans and has also studied other novel aspects of “**adipokine**” function including a potential role for **low adiponectin levels** in cancer risk.” We are elated that his long and persistent research efforts have brought to him recognition of the highest order. We warmly congratulate him for his achievement and wish him unabated success in the years to come. We wish him also to persist in contributing to the collective efforts of his academic and scholarly colleagues in support of Hellenic Culture and Ideals, which can heal, as we believe, many other maladies in the world.

How a Greek Canadian Views his Hellenic Identity

The following article appeared in the Sunday issue of the Athenian daily KATHIMERINI on 10/4/09. In it, Hellenic Link member Dr. Pandelis Halamandaris, answers questions put to him by Reporter Anna Grimani for her column PATRIDOGNOSIA:

ΠΑΤΡΙΔΟΓΝΩΣΙΑ της Άννας Γριμάνη

Παντελής Χαλαμανδάρης

«Μας ζημιώνει η αντίληψη ότι είμαστε εξυπνότεροι από τους άλλους»

Η ελληνικότητα είναι αίσθημα ή συνείδηση;

Έχοντας ζήσει όλη μου τη ζωή στη Διασπορά, θα έλεγα ότι είναι τόσο αίσθημα όσο και συνείδηση. Η διατήρηση της ελληνικότητας στην Ελλάδα είναι κάτι φυσικό, παρά τις πιέσεις του μιμητισμού και της πολυπολιτισμικότητας, όμως, για τον Έλληνα της Διασποράς, που προσπαθεί να επιβιώσει και να δημιουργήσει, μέσα σε μια άλλη κουλτούρα, αυτό είναι πολύ δύσκολο. Η ελληνικότητα προϋποθέτει τη γνώση της ελληνικής γλώσσας, του πολιτισμού και των αξιών της ανθρωπότητας. Συνεπώς, χρειάζεται μια εντατική και καινοτόμος προσέγγιση στη διδασκαλία της γλώσσας και της Ιστορίας για τα παιδιά μας και για τους μη ελληνόφωνους - ιδιαίτερα όταν στη Διασπορά δεν εισρέει πλέον «νέο αίμα» Ελλήνων μεταναστών.

Τι πιο μικρό ελληνικό αγάπησα.

Το άρωμα του πεύκου. Το γλάρο, που συχνά πετάει πλάι από τη γαλανόλευκη που κυματίζει στην πρύμνη ενός ελληνικού πλοίου. Τη βελανιδιά στο κέντρο της Τσαγκαράδας. Το καφενείο της παλιάς γειτονιάς, όπου με τον καφέ μάθαινα όλα τα νέα της ημέρας, όλα τα αθλητικά, όπως και το «τι θα έκανα αν ήμουν πρωθυπουργός!».

Η υπέροχη εκδοχή του Έλληνα.

Ο πατριωτισμός και το φιλότιμό του, η αγάπη του για την οικογένεια, που τον κάνει να θυσιάσει τα πάντα για να ανέβουν τα παιδιά του στα ψηλότερα πανεπιστημιακά και κοινωνικά σκαλοπάτια, ανεξάρτητα από την καταγωγή του.

Αυτό που με χαλάει.

Ο σοβινισμός που οδηγεί σε εθνικισμό και τελικά στην ξενοφοβία. Η αντίληψη ότι «είμαστε εξυπνότεροι» από όλους τους άλλους, που τελικά ζημιώνει την αξιοπιστία μας. Μπορούμε να κάνουμε το σωστό πράγμα χωρίς επίβλεψη; Μπορεί η ελληνική παιδεία, και το πανεπιστήμιο ειδικότερα, να λειτουργήσει μακριά από κομματικά συμφέροντα; Μπορούν οι διάφοροι οργανισμοί της Διασποράς να συνεργαστούν μεταξύ τους;

Προσόν ή μειονέκτημα να είσαι Έλληνας σήμερα;

Εξαρτάται - αν κρίνουμε από τους ακαδημαϊκούς κύκλους και την επιχειρηματικότητα. Το να είσαι Έλληνας οπωσδήποτε αποτελεί ένα ισχυρό πλεονέκτημα, που εύκολα όμως γίνεται μειονέκτημα, αν επιλέξεις φτηνές προσεγγίσεις στο αντικείμενό σου.

Παράγει πολιτισμό ο Έλληνας της νέας εποχής ή μένει προσκολλημένος σε μια ρητορική ελληνικότητα;

Ο Έλληνας είναι πάντα ικανός να δημιουργήσει νέα γνώση και πολιτισμό, ιδιαίτερα εκτός Ελλάδος, λόγω των δυνατοτήτων που υπάρχουν. Όμως, και οι ευκαιρίες που παρέχουν τα κοινοτικά κονδύλια θα μπορούσαν να αξιοποιηθούν πολύ καλύτερα.

Με ποια ταυτότητα οι Έλληνες περιέρχονται τον σύγχρονο κόσμο;

Ο Έλληνας της Διασποράς δεν έχει μια ταυτότητα. Όταν διαπραγματευόμουν διεθνή προγράμματα αναβάθμισης των εκπαιδευτικών, χρηματοδοτούμενα από την καναδική κυβέρνηση, στην Αφρική και στην Κίνα, ήμουν «ο Καναδός». Όταν συναντιόμαστε ξανά το βράδυ, ήμουν «ο Έλληνας από τον Καναδά».

Το ελληνικό μου «γιατί» και ένα «πρέπει» που πέταξα.

Γιατί η προσφορά των Ελλήνων, που εξειδικεύτηκαν στον τομέα τους και επιστρέφουν στην Ελλάδα, να είναι περιορισμένη;

Οι Έλληνες διδάσκοντες στη Διασπορά δεν πρέπει να προέρχονται από μέρη με απόσταση, αλλά από τις επιτόπιες παροικίες.

Ο Έλληνας ποιητής μου.

Η «Ιθάκη» και «Οι Θερμοπύλες» του Καβάφη αντηχούν μέσα μου, όπως όταν ακούω για τον Διγενή Ακρίτα να παλεύει με τον Χάροντα στα δημοτικά μας τραγούδια.

Η αδιαπραγμάτευτη ελληνική αλήθεια μου.

Η αγάπη για την πατρίδα και την ελευθερία.

Η Οδός των Ελλήνων στον παγκόσμιο χάρτη - ορίστε την.

Η οδός των Ελλήνων στον παγκόσμιο χάρτη περνά από την ελληνική και παγκόσμια Ιστορία, πυξίδα για όποια πράξη αφορά το καλό της ανθρωπότητας.

*Ο Παντελής Χαλαμανδάρης είναι ομότιμος καθηγητής Παιδαγωγικών του Πανεπιστημίου του Brandon, αν. διευθυντής του Κέντρου Ελληνικού Πολιτισμού του Πανεπιστημίου της Manitoba και πρόεδρος του Ελληνοκαναδικού Κογκρέσου της ίδιας περιοχής

Omada Aegeou: Introduced to the NYC Community

On December 9, as previously announced (Bulletin No. 82), the Hellenic Medical Society of New York in collaboration with the Hellenic Link, Inc. in a special event introduced the Omada tou Aegeou (The Aegean Team) to the Hellenic – American Community of the Greater New York. As previously explained, the Team, consisting of physicians of various specialties and other professionals has been engaged for 15 years in outreach assistance of the remote islands, population less than 3,000, in the Eastern Aegean. These outpost-islands are essentially isolated from the rest of the country (for medical emergencies, ordinary healthcare and other human needs) as they lack regular connection by passenger ship or otherwise with the larger islands in the Aegean and with the mainland. According to information we have received, the assistance offered by the Omada Aegeou, delivered by its own motorboats is substantial, and is eagerly awaited, received, utilized and widely appreciated.

The event of Dec. 9 attracted members of the community, including local residents of Aegean island origin. This audience was particularly interested in the presentation made by the Omada representatives Drs. George Plakogiannakis and Nikolaos Touroutoglou, who, in addition to a very informative DVD on the 15-year history of their Team's actions, clearly and convincingly answered numerous questions on the nature, structure and makeup of their nonprofit volunteer Organization and on the mode in which it provides support to the Aegean islanders. They further explained that present needs include the expansion in some medical specialties and donations for the the purchase of sea - water desalting apparatus, as the islands in question are in dire need for potable water, as well as for household needs, gardening, etc.

There was an encouraging response for assistance. The Hellenic Medical Society of New York undertook to organize a team from its own members to participate in the “medical expedition” of the Spring 2010 (May 13-23), alongside the Aegean Team. It has made also arrangements to collect funds in support of the sea-water desalting project. There was an immediate response to the relevant appeal and the first donations were presented. It is foreseen, that specialists of other professional disciplines would be appropriate for an integrated plan of community support for the Eastern Aegean area (e.g., experts on renewable energy sources, educators, social work practitioners, nutritionists, agriculturalists, fishery experts). The Hellenic Link, Inc. is making an appeal among its members and the community in general for this type of interdisciplinary support. Efforts will be made to disseminate the information on the existing needs and the invitation being made to offer real support, among other Greek communities outside New York. For more information, please call the HMS office (718-398-2440) or log on the Web Site: www.Omadaaigaiou.gr

Professionals and students in every discipline or field of endeavor, whether of Greek Descent or Philhellenes, are cordially invited to join the Hellenic Link, Inc. as members. It is quite easy and useful! Just contact us at any of the indicated addresses

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