This edition of February’s mid-month seminar series was not one to be forgotten. With names like Ms. Mary Callaway and Dr. Nessa Coyle gracing the faculty list, a flowering branch of medicine was targeted to an Eastern European centered group of doctors. Having promptly readied for a new week of seminars, the staff at Schloss Arenberg assisted co-directors Drs. Alan Carver and Kathleen M. Foley, in the dissemination of information drawing upon evidence based research and practices in the field of Palliative Care. Comparable to the surgeon’s delicacy and simultaneous laser focus, yet applicable for all in the health care profession, Palliative Care expertise was both expanded and observed in this week’s seminar.

With the motto, “Don’t just do something, stand there!” world experts in Palliative Care instructed the current and rising medical leaders from Macedonia, Armenia and Moldova how to care for, among others, terminally ill patients. Leading this charge were Dr. Kathleen M. Foley and Dr. Alan Carver in their 18th and 4th trips to Schloss Arenberg, respectively. These two, along with the rest of the faculty, stressed the importance of palliative care being employed 100% of the time although simultaneously with one’s specialty, hammering home the idea that human virtue can become a learned skill, and compassion a form of medicine. Like all mature instruction, this seminar balanced propinquity instruction with practical care, and the resulting impressions that lectures such as, “Supporting the Family” by Dr. Nessa Coyle and, “Evaluation and Treatment of Epidural Spinal Cord Compression” by Dr. Eli Diamond had on the fellows according to the evaluations was immediately recognizable. The fellows’ inspiration, the inception of new ideas, will spur them on to not only be better doctors, but better humans with respect to compassion, gentleness, and tenderness. Mary Callaway set the future on the right course with her concluding lectures, “How to Set Up A Palliative Care Program in Your Hospital or Community” and, “Educational Resources for Palliative Care”.

At the farewell dinner, where toasts abounded and Macedonians sat at the Armenian table, Moldovan’s at the Macedonian and vice versa, the conversation revolving around how Armenian and Moldavian hospice’s were not only springing up, but that their role in medical care actually outpaces hospice development in many western countries was something all acknowledged with delight, pride, and hope.

Schloss Arenberg afforded a scene for exchange of knowledge and friendship, inspiration and hope. Notwithstanding though, as was noted often and by many, the work in Eastern Europe is just beginning. Expanding this field rests on the motivation and willingness of the fellows to strive to collaborate. Many of the current faculty initially did not enjoy the comforts and monetary support their programs now have. Quite so, the grandeur and importance of the Schloss Arenberg and the seminars within are a reflection of Palliative Care’s current prominence and significance in the Western medical world, and a vision of what it can be in the Eastern.
Group Faculty Photo, (L-R): (Course Director) Dr. Kathleen M. Foley, MD; Dr. Eli L. Diamond, MD; Dr. Nessa Coyle, Ph.D; (Course Director) Dr. Alan Carver, MD; Mary Callaway, MME; Dr. Andrew J. Rothman, MD.

Group Photo of Fellows and Faculty
Salzburg OMI Seminar

Palliative Care in Neurology and Neuro-Oncology

Diary of Armine Abrahamyan, MS, MPH

American University of Armenia (AUA)

February 7th – February 13th, 2016

I have arrived in Salzburg being already in love with the city and the program after the animated introduction about Schloss Arenberg, “Armenian Lounge” and Salzburg from those of my friends who previously attended seminars organized by Open Medical Institute.

February 7th, Sunday – Salzburg: the city of Music

My first encounter was with the impressive punctuality, warming hospitality and illuminating guidance. Right at the arrival at the airport I have noticed the punctual driver expecting us at the waiting area. The professionalism could be sensed in the air. The whole way from the airport to the Schloss Arenberg the driver told us about the villages and highways we passed by, revealed the secret places for tasting best beer. After couple of hours of this enjoyable and illuminating tour we were in front of the Schloss Arenberg, surrounded by fascinating garden with modern sculptures.

In the evening we participated in a reception and met honorable Faculty. The director of the Medical Programs of the American Austrian Foundation Dr. Wolfgang Aulitzky introduced the Faculty (Drs. Kathleen Foley, Alan Carver, Andrew Roth, Eli Diamond, Nessa Coyle, and Mary Callaway) and the content of upcoming seminar. After the reception we enjoyed each other’s company and the fabulous dinner.

February 8th, Monday – Palliative Care is all about Life

Every morning we started our lectures at 8:00 am, SHARP, by all the sharpness of that word. Even though Dr. Mary Callaway told us to respect others and be on time for the sessions, at first I thought that some of us will be late all the time. However, I couldn’t be mistaken more. In my perspective, there is no better indicator of the quality of a program but the total presence of the participants to each and every session.

All participants introduced themselves and highlighted their expectations from the Seminar. I must note that I felt proud see that among the participants Armenians comprised the majority among others from Russian Federation, Republic of Moldova, and Republic of Macedonia.

Pre-test was conducted to assess our baseline knowledge on Palliative Care in Neurology and Neuro-Oncology. I have to admit that there were several sections that were quite difficult since I am a clinical psychologist and have a lack of expertise in the medical field. Nevertheless, I have found the introductory lectures in neuro oncology very useful for me. During the series of first lectures we covered basis of Palliative care in Neurology and Neuro-Oncology, as well as identified the essential Palliative care competences. After each presentation we evaluated the content and the delivery of the lecture.
February 9th, Tuesday- Palliative Care: We do not treat the disease; we treat the patient with the disease

I must admit that, today I enjoyed the most since most of the lectures we covered were dedicated to such psychiatric and psychological issues as assessment and treatment of delirium, anxiety and depression. I would never expect that such content oriented course could be perfectly combined with fun and ease. It was three of us who had background in psychology and we used every chance to meet and talk to Dr. Andrew Roth about various psychological and psychiatric issues.

February 10th, Wednesday- Hospice: Sometimes the Silence is also Music

After series of lectures we went to Hospice. It was my first visit to this special house with its own atmosphere, philosophy and spirit.

February 11th, Thursday

Like every other day, today we started with a lecture. Participants’ presentations followed the lectures. Physicians from Macedonia presented two very interesting case studies and I presented my master thesis project on pediatric palliative care in Armenia.

After dinner both Faculty and participants enjoyed the marvelous Chamber Music Concert with Vera Otasek and Gabriele Toscani.

February 12th, Friday

Today we covered several very important topics on how to set up a palliative care program in a hospital or a community. In addition to this we had been provided with many didactic resources and materials on palliative care worldwide.

At the end of the course we completed a post evaluation test to assess our knowledge on Palliative care.

We participated in a farewell reception and a graduation dinner during which the certificates of attendance were awarded. We were very proud and satisfied as the seminar was very tough and full of emotional/sensitive topics.

February 13th, Saturday

As the seminar was over and we had one free day, our small group decided to spend it in Munich, Germany.

The next day we left Schloss Arenberg equipped with solid knowledge on subject matter and full of inspiration to become advocates of palliative care in our communities.

Lessons learned:

- To become an advocate of palliative care; since now I know for sure that people who receive palliation live longer.
• To be involved in any initiative in my country related to opioid availability and accessibility; since now I know that living without pain is a person’s right and morphine does not hasten the death but helps person to die without pain.

• I needed this knowledge very much as sometimes while providing psychological counseling to parents with children with cancer I encountered situations where I needed to provide them with the information related to misconception about morphine and becoming addicted to it. In order to convince someone I should be very confident and knowledgeable.

• Now I have lots of trustworthy resources, generously provided by Dr. Kathleen Foley that I will use in provision of pediatric palliative care in Armenia.

Thanks to Faculty and Administrative staff of Schloss Arenberg for this wonderful week.

    Thank you 😊