

University of Georgia (Tbilisi) Faculty visits COHPA/UCF

Dr. Otar Vasadzde, Head of the Department of Health Administration of the University of Georgia in Tbilisi and Dr. Ramaz Urushadze, Coordinator of a newly established master's program in health administration of the same University and Head of Unit at the National Center for Disease Control and Public Health of Georgia visited UCF from June 23 to June 27, 2009. UCF has been working in a partnership project with other US and Georgian universities developing health management education (HME) programs in support of Georgia's health reform project.

With the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and coordinated by the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) with the goal of further strengthening the HME capacity in the country and promoting sustainability, two partnerships have been established to support the health reform efforts. One of these partnerships is integrated by the University of Georgia in Tbilisi, the University of Scranton, and the University of Central Florida in addition to other US service organizations. The partners have been developing an international quality health services specialization/ concentration building on the existing Master of Business Administration curricula and two certificate programs and modules for practicing health care managers, one directed to hospitals and the other for health insurance companies. They have also promoted faculty, curricula and teaching materials development, and case-based teaching models and practical internships to ensure maximum adaptation of training for practical experience. These targets were achieved through technical assistance, faculty exchanges, extensive training, and promotion of international learning standards.

The Georgian Health Reform:

The Georgian health care system is undergoing an important restructuring process targeted at improving health care service delivery, equity in health care financing, and better access to quality health care services, with the ultimate goal of improving the health status of the population. The Government of Georgia (GoG) has identified priority areas such as bolstering the education sector in order to produce adequate human resources, reforming

the provider network, strengthening protection for the rights of patients and providers, and improving the quality of clinical services.

The new reforms offer significant opportunities for the improvement of health services in Georgia through the development of new capital infrastructure to replace outdated and inefficient medical facilities, an expansion of private sector investment in health care, improved quality and efficiency of health care services through market mechanisms and provider competition, and targeted public financing for the poor. However, there are also many challenges that have been identified and are being addressed early on in the process of these reforms, among the most important being the need to count with a critical mass of adequate professional human resources with the skills and knowledge to plan, design, and carry out implementation of the reforms both within the public and private sectors.

The GoG recognizes that substantial educational efforts are required to achieve the ambitious health care reforms. Educational efforts require not only short-term courses and on-the-job training, but post-graduate programs and research efforts that address core disciplines of health care management and administration, hospital and clinic administration, health care planning, health economics, health care financing, health insurance, epidemiology, and public health.

The visit schedule and activities:

The visit of Drs. Vasadze and Usushadze was coordinated by Dr. Bernardo Ramirez, assistant professor of the Health Management and Informatics Department, who has participated in the training activities in Georgia. They discussed several issues regarding curricula and teaching methodology that are being implemented in the new programs with Dr. Aaron Liberman and other faculty of the department. The two Georgian visitors held a meeting with Dean Michael Frumkin to discuss future collaboration opportunities and visited the campus with Associate Dean Melvin Rogers. They met with Angel Cardec from the office of International Affairs and reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding that will be signed by the two universities to further develop our partnership.

The University of Georgia is interested in extending their educational opportunities to other parts of the country; they have already started offering some satellite courses in other cities and are developing the conditions and infrastructure for distance education. To this end, they visited the Daytona Regional Campus and met with Drs. Linda Bradley and Lawrence Braue to discuss and exchange ideas on this topic. They also were interested in learning more about our health services and public health department, so they visited the Halifax Medical Center, Florida Hospital Orlando campus, and the Orange County Health Department where they attended meetings with the directors and key staff and toured the facilities.

Our visitors left UCF and Orlando with renewed commitment to our partnership and a better understanding of our potential future collaboration. Before returning to their country, they traveled to Chicago to attend the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) Annual Meeting, where they made a presentation of our partnership and continued their academic discussions with our faculty and other colleagues from the major accredited health management programs in the country.

Photos:



Dr. Otar Vasadzde and Dr. Ramaz Urushadze visiting with Dean Michael Frumkin



Visiting the campus with Associate Dean Rogers and Bernardo Ramirez



Reviewing the MOU in the Office of Internationalization with Angel Cardec



In Daytona Regional Campus with Dr. Linda Bradley



Visiting Halifax Medical Center in Daytona



Visit to the Orange County Health Department