

ABMDR

ARMENIAN BONE MARROW DONOR REGISTRY

2022 NEWSLETTER



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DR. NEBAR BOGHOSSIAN

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When Armenia and the Diaspora join forces, the sky is the limit



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Whenever Armenia and the Diaspora come together, driven by trust, respect, and mutual understanding, they can create magic. This is what took place 23 years ago, when we combined our forces together, in equal partnership, and created the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry.

Recently, the spirit of Armenia-Diaspora collaboration was once again at work, and became even more palpable, in the research that was conducted by ABMDR and a team of Armenian scientists. Through our research, we played a humble role in understanding the role of HLA

molecules in the regulation of the body's response to COVID-19, thereby contributing to the global scientific community's knowledge of the virus. This is a very prestigious achievement for Armenia (please see page 6 for further details).

Indeed, achieving great things through collaboration is exactly what transpired in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as extreme hardship also served to underscore the pan-Armenian nature of ABMDR. It was thanks to a singular spirit of partnership between Homeland and Diaspora that ABMDR was able to not only provide support to all of our cancer patients, but to forge ahead with our operations, and, as importantly, to conduct a significant research.

During the pandemic, cancer patients suffered the most. Because of their already-compromised immune systems, they became more isolated. However, the demand for finding a match did not stop and we did not stop our operations, despite all the hurdles brought on by COVID-19. During this period, we continued to receive many referrals for patients and did our utmost to help them. In fact, we facilitated our 37th and 38th stem cell harvesting procedures in 2021 and early 2022, for patients in Canada and France. We collected stem cells from our donors in Yerevan, and, despite all the pandemic-related travel restrictions, were able to deliver the harvested stem cells to Europe, thus saving two more precious lives.

Through our research, we were able to bridge the knowledge and expertise of the Diaspora with those of the Homeland to once again create a unique project. Today, we salute all of our partners and sponsors, who believed in us and helped us deliver groundbreaking research during the pandemic, research whose findings were published in one of the world's top medical journals.

Frieda Jordan, PhD, President

MESSAGE FROM THE HONORARY CHAIR

Once again, I'm proud beyond words when I consider what the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry has accomplished over the last year. Not only did it continue its routine laboratory work of tissue-typing, finding matches, cord blood banking, and enabling kidney transplants under extremely trying conditions imposed on us all by the COVID-19 pandemic, it also managed to harvest stem cells for two patients, in Canada and France, and thus helped save two more lives. In addition, the research project that ABMDR developed, conducted, completed, and got published in a first-rate scientific journal makes me appreciate, once again, what an extraordinary organization this is, and how dedicated and accomplished its members are, in Armenia and throughout the Diaspora. Congratulations. Hats off to you all. Not only do you help patients in need, but you also make us proud to consider ourselves part of ABMDR.

Bella Kocharyan, MD
Honorary Chair, former First Lady of Armenia



Ask the Doctor: an interview with ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan



Q: First, congratulations for continuing to carry out all of ABMDR's daily functions through more than two grueling years of COVID-19. But also, congratulations on the publication of your research studies on COVID and HLA.

A. Thank you. This was a massive effort on the part of so many of us under very trying conditions, but we are very happy that all this work paid off. Our paper just got published in *Frontiers in Immunology*, a very prestigious scientific journal, and is generating a great deal of interest in the medical and scientific communities internationally.

Q. Briefly, what was the main point of this research project?

A. The main focus was to explore the possibility that some specific HLA types would make people more susceptible to severe symptoms, and/or that some HLA genes would protect people from severe disease.

Q. Did you find either?

A. Actually, we found both. We discovered that a specific gene (HLA-C*04:01) makes individuals who carry that gene far more likely to get moderate or severe symptoms of COVID-19 than those who do not carry that version of the gene. We also discovered that another gene (HLA-B*51:01) to some degree protects individuals who carry it from symptomatic disease.

Q. That's amazing! Why did you even think that there might be a connection between COVID and specific HLA types?

A. It's well established that many factors — including age, general health, and medical history of infected individuals — have a big impact on how severe the disease will be. But regarding HLA and COVID: we know that the HLA proteins, which are determined by HLA genes, play a key role in alerting and waking up the immune system against infectious particles, including viruses. HLA proteins are constantly patrolling the body to find foreign particles. They bind to these particles and present them to the immune system, which then mounts a war against the invading infection. Specific HLA proteins, being slightly different from each other, may have a higher or lower ability to recognize specific viral particles, and may therefore elicit a stronger or weaker immune response to an infection. That was the scientific basis, the starting point of our study.

Q. That's fascinating. Clearly, scientifically very important. Any immediate practical implications?

A. It helps us understand the role of genetics in why some are more susceptible to COVID than others. But another important point to note is that HLA-C*04:01 is very prevalent among Armenians. This knowledge should give the public and health providers yet another science-based fact, and allow individuals to take it into account in assessing their own risk, and making their choice to get vaccinated or not accordingly.



Thank you to all who work so hard to fulfill the mission of the ABMDR. Happy to share that Alique is once again in remission! Thank you for your prayers and support. — Michele and Alique

ABMDR performs its 37th and 38th harvesting procedures, to help save the lives of patients in Canada and France

On December 13, 2021, a Yerevan resident donated bone marrow stem cells to help save the life of a patient in Canada. The donor was identified by ABMDR as a perfect bone marrow match for the patient, who suffered from leukemia.

The harvesting of the donor's bone marrow stem cells was performed in the Armenian capital, with the intention of using them for an urgent transplant that could potentially save the patient's life.

The painless, non-invasive harvesting of the donor's stem cells was the 37th such procedure in ABMDR's history. As soon as the harvesting was completed, the cells were flown to Canada with the help of a special courier. Present at the harvesting procedure were ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan and ABMDR Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan, among other lab-staff members.

Commenting on the process of harvesting a donor's stem cells and delivering them for a life-saving transplant, Dr. Sevak Avagyan said, "Every link in the chain of medical professionals who relay the hope of life

from hand to hand, from country to country, must work smoothly. This is when all borders are opened, people forget their nationality, and pursue a single goal: to deliver the precious donated stem cells as soon as possible for a chance to save the life of a patient."

On January 17, 2022, another Yerevan resident donated bone marrow stem cells to help save the life of an ethnic-Armenian patient who lives in France. The harvesting of the donor's bone marrow stem cells, likewise performed in Yerevan, was ABMDR's 38th, and the first in the history of the organization to benefit an Armenian patient living in France. The donor wished to remain anonymous.

"We are extremely grateful to our donor," said ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan following the harvesting and continued: "Once the donor was identified as a perfect match for the patient in France, he stepped forward without a moment's hesitation and went on to donate his bone marrow stem cells. This process — of a registered donor being identified as a match and immediately donating bone marrow stem cells to help save someone's life — is the very essence of our mission."



Above: Dr. Sevak Avagyan (left) and the international courier who delivered the donated bone marrow stem cells to Canada. Below: Dr. Avagyan and Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan flanking the international courier who delivered the donated bone marrow stem cells to France.



Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan checking in on the Yerevan resident who donated bone marrow stem cells for a chance to save the life of a cancer patient in Canada.



In November 2021, during a visit to our headquarters in Yerevan, Hampig Sassounian expressed high praise for our operations and joined the ranks of ABMDR.



Photo above: visitors included ABMDR Board member and lifetime supporter Stepan Vartanian (first from left) and his sister, Mary, pictured here with Dr. Frieda Jordan and Dr. Sevak Avagyan.
Photo below: We were also delighted to welcome ABMDR Board member Sonia Nersissian.



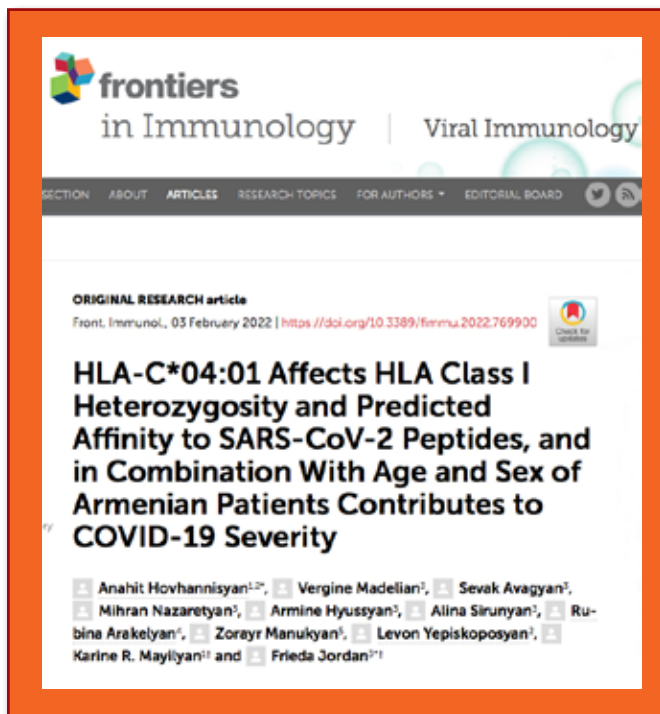
Team-member spotlight: Dr. Hayk Davtyan



Dr. Hayk Davtyan is an Associate Research Professor at the Institute for Memory Impairments and Neurological Disorders at the University of California, Irvine. He came to the US in 2006 with a wealth of experience and educational credentials. He graduated from Yerevan State University in 2001 with an MS in Biophysics, and, in 2004, was awarded a PhD in Molecular Biology. Dr. Davtyan started his collaboration with ABMDR's Tissue-Typing Laboratory in 2001. Within a short time, he became a key person in the laboratory, and, consequently, was given a unique opportunity in 2002 to participate in a training session at Foundation Laboratory in Glendora, California. Three years later, thanks in considerable part to Dr. Davtyan's efforts and success, ABMDR's HLA-typing Laboratory received accreditation from the European Federation for Immunogenetics. During 2006-2016, Dr. Davtyan completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship, followed by employment as an Associate Scientist at the Institute for Molecular Medicine, Department of Immunology. In 2017, he joined the Stem Cell Research Center at UC Irvine, where he continues his work today. A major focus of Dr. Davtyan's research centers around the neuroimmunology of Alzheimer's Disease and related neurodegenerative disorders. Dr. Davtyan has co-authored more than 45 peer-reviewed publications, and his work has been presented at some of the most highly recognized international conferences in the field.

ABMDR's landmark research findings on how COVID-19 affects Armenians published in leading medical journal

An article containing the findings of a major COVID-19 research conducted by ABMDR has been published in *Frontiers in Immunology*, one of the world's leading medical journals. The results of the landmark research, which was conducted by ABMDR in collaboration with various Armenian scientists, pertain to the specific manners in which the COVID-19 virus affects ethnic Armenians. The article was published in the February 3, 2022 issue of *Frontiers in Immunology*.



The lead page of the article detailing the findings of ABMDR's research.

A preeminent journal in its field, *Frontiers in Immunology* publishes rigorously peer-reviewed research across basic, translational, and clinical immunology. *Frontiers in Immunology* is the official journal of the International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS).

Commenting on the publication of the ABMDR article, Dr. Frieda Jordan, president of the organization, stated, "I think this is a historic milestone, as the results of a critically-important and timely research conducted by a team of Armenian scientists is being shared with the global medical community, contributing to a better understanding of a devastating pandemic."

The ABMDR article, published in the "Viral Immunology" section of *Frontiers in Immunology*, was co-authored by Dr. Anahit Hovhannisyanyan, Dr. Vergine Madelian, Dr. Sevak Avagyan, Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan, Armine Hyussyan, Alina Sirunyan, Rubina Arakelyan, Zorayr Manukyan, Levon Yepiskoposyan, Karine Mayilyan, and Dr. Frieda Jordan.

ABMDR's COVID-19 research was made possible through the collaboration of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Armenia; Institute of Molecular Biology, National Academy of Sciences, Yerevan; Yerevan State Medical University; Russian-Armenian University, Yerevan; ClinSoft Armenia, Yerevan; ClinStat Group, Lexington, Massachusetts; and HistoGenetics, New York, which donated all testing required for the research. The project was funded in part by Dr. Carolann and George Najarian and the Armenian American Medical Society.

What the ABMDR research revealed

At the onset of the pandemic in Armenia, ABMDR embarked on a research study to investigate the correlation between COVID-19 and HLA molecules (human Leukocyte antigens). The rationale of the study was that some COVID-19 patients suffer rather mild or even no symptoms (asymptomatic), while others develop severe conditions requiring hospitalization and might die.



Strategizing with Armenia's Health Ministry: from left, First Deputy Minister of Health Lena Nanushyan, ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan, ABMDR Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan, and Minister of Health Anahit Avanesyan.

Many factors can influence immune response to the infection, such as age, pre-existing medical conditions, and environmental factors. The ABMDR research primarily focused



Anahit Hovhannisyanyan, the first author of the article containing ABMDR's research findings. Since January 2022, Anahit has been a researcher at the School of Genetics and Microbiology, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. Her research project is focused on studying the population history and genetic makeup of Armenians, utilizing data on ancient DNA from archaeological specimens from the region, in conjunction with modern Armenian genomes. With this conjoint approach, she and her colleagues will be able to solve a range of longstanding evolutionary questions.

on the role of HLA genetic factors in the severity of the disease. It is well known that HLA molecules play a vital role in the development and regulation of the immune system and its response to viral particles. HLA molecules bind to peptides derived from the virus and present them to the body's defense cells, hence triggering an adaptive immune response against the invader, such as the COVID-19 virus.

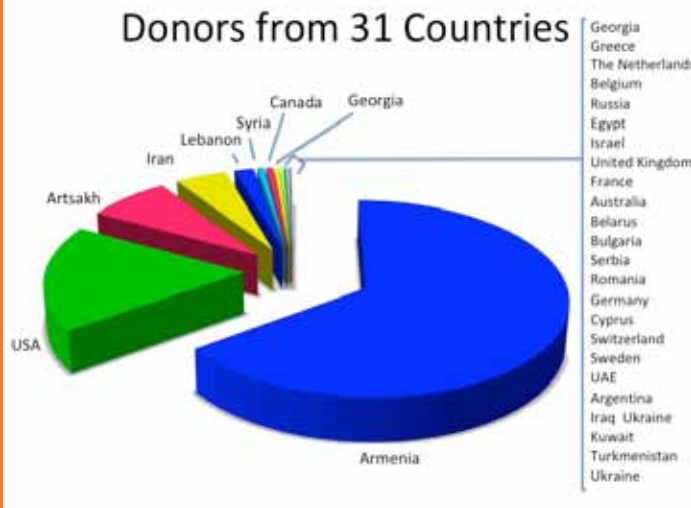
In our research, we asked two core questions: are there any specific HLA molecules that provide susceptibility to the disease, and are there any HLA molecules that provide protection against it? We subsequently assembled a large number of COVID patients for our study and divided them into three groups, each representing a specific clinical status: asymptomatic, mild, and severe. We tested all patients for their HLA type.

Results of our study indicated that patients who carried the HLA-C*04:01 gene ended up with mild or severe disease, while those who did not carry this gene were asymptomatic. Moreover, our study indicated that patients who carried the

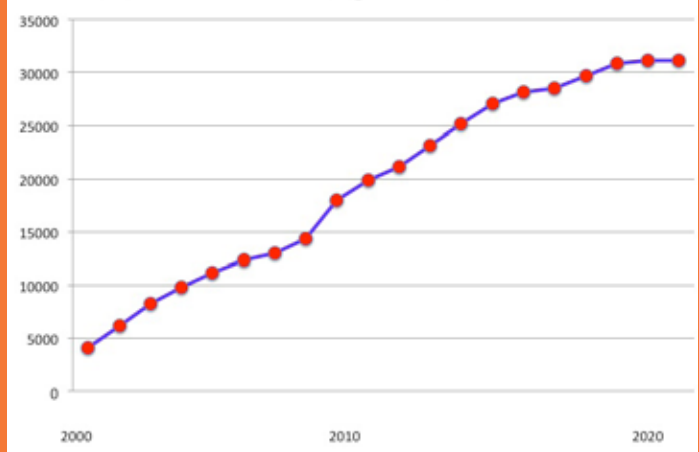
gene HLA-B*51:01 were somewhat protected against symptomatic COVID-19. These results point to the significant role of HLA genetic variation in the development of a specific immune response to COVID-19. Our research findings represent a high degree of clinical relevance as we have established that in a sample population of 5,579 Armenians, a very high percentage of patients (2,200) carries the HLA-C*04:01 gene and is therefore at a higher risk of getting moderate to severe symptoms of COVID-19. Going forward, testing for HLA alleles will strengthen the strategic clinical management of the disease and assist the educational and outreach efforts of Armenia's health authorities in the implementation of systemic responses, including vaccination programs.

The work of ABMDR in 2021: a snapshot

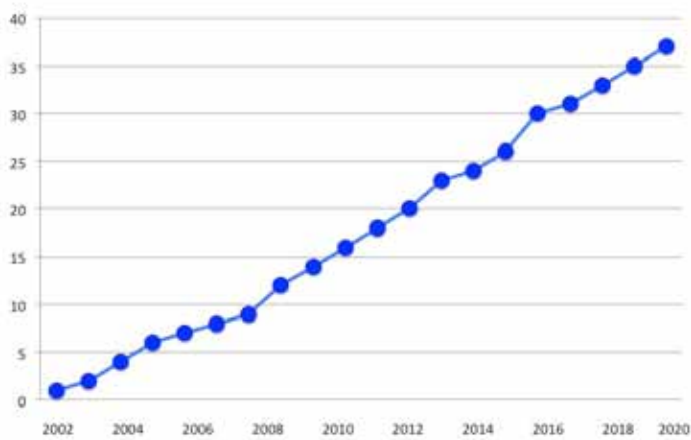
Donors from 31 Countries



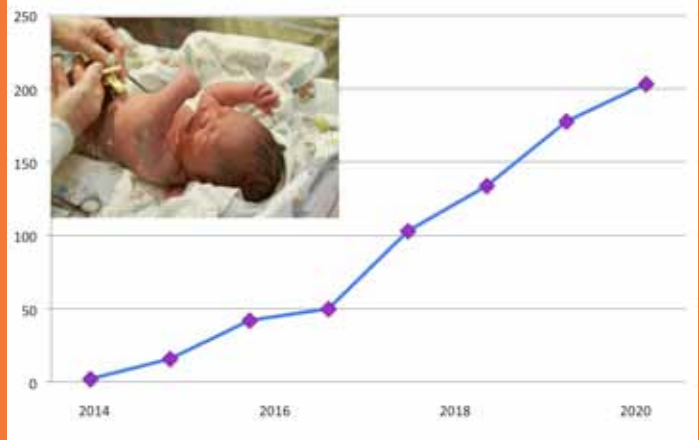
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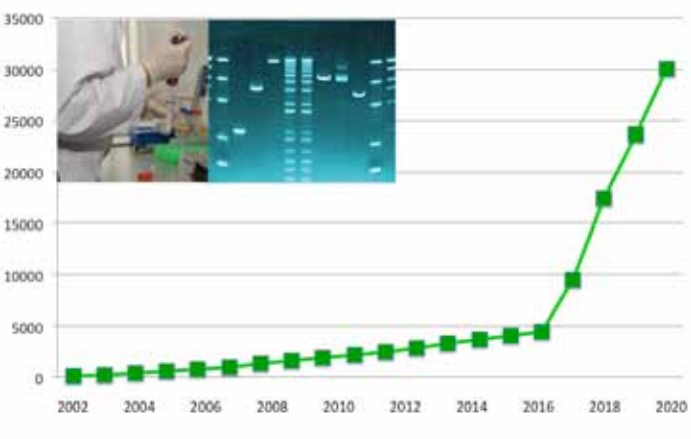
38 Transplants



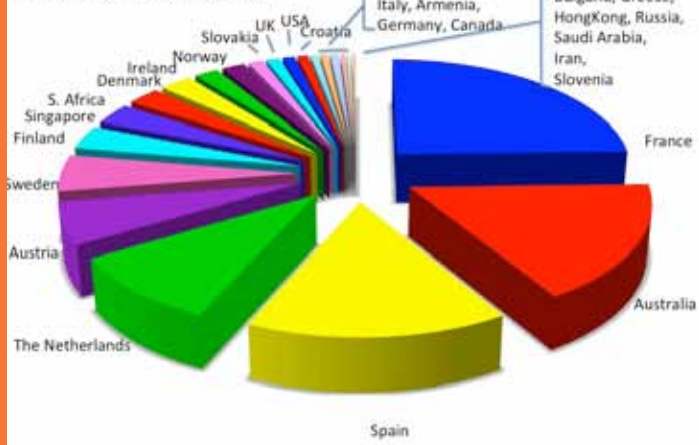
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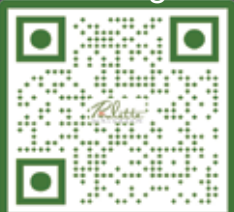
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Alec Der-Sirakian

Alec Der-Sirakian started participating in ABMDR's New England walkathons when he was seven years old. The following is a fundraising appeal that he wrote in the run-up to the 2021 walkathon in Watertown, Massachusetts. No one asked him to, and he didn't ask for anyone's help. Alec understands exactly what he is fundraising for. Through the 2021 New England walk, he raised \$1,500.

Hello, everyone,
Hope you are all doing well.

For the ninth year (since third grade), I will be participating in the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry's Walk of Life. Two years ago, with support from many of you, I was one of the two top fundraisers for the walk — which was very cool.

ABMDR raises money for people who are in need of a bone marrow transplant. As you likely know, Armenians have the "good fortune" of being very hard to match due to some genetic challenges, so ABMDR is really important for our community. Much like most things in 2020, the physical ABMDR Walk of Life did not take place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore I am extremely excited to do the walk and resume my support for this worthy cause.

Hopefully you, too, can join the walk. Or if you can't and would like to help, please consider sponsoring my walk by making a donation. Please don't feel like you have to make a donation. As always, just rooting for me is great too! The walk will take place on September 25 at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, in Watertown. Please feel free to share the walkathon email / link with anyone you think would be interested in walking or donating. Thank you so much for your support and I hope to see you all very soon.

Sincerely,
Alec Der-Sirakian



Anita Petrosyan

I graduated from the University of Southern California with a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology, and a Minor in Psychology. I aspire to become a physician associate and provide care to the medically disadvantaged in underdeveloped countries. My passion was sparked several years ago, during one of my medical missions to Honduras. Since then my aspirations have strengthened, as I champion for international medical organizations.

In 2019, I joined ABMDR because I was drawn to their unrelenting mission of saving the lives of Armenians around the world by facilitating the process of bone marrow stem cell transplantation. During my time with ABMDR, I learned about the importance of community, and the fact that it takes only one person to make a difference. When I become a practicing PA, I will provide medical care to the underprivileged across the world, and continue to support ABMDR in its marvelous mission.



Lori Mehdikhani

I am currently a senior at Crescenta Valley High School. This year, I wanted to take an active role in raising awareness for the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry's life-saving mission, just like my family has done in previous years, as a strong supporter of ABMDR. As Director of Services with the CV (Crescenta Valley) Armenian club, I set up its team for the 2021 Walk of Life in Los Angeles, to raise awareness among CV students and their families and raise funds in support of ABMDR. I sent out an email to the members of the club, explaining the background of ABMDR in hopes of emphasizing the importance of unifying the Armenian community for its cause. Additionally, to facilitate the process, I provided a link for joining our team and directions on how to sign up on the ABMDR website. The CV Armenian Club also helped spread the message by posting the Walk of Life flyer on its Instagram to reach out to more students. I believe every little effort is well worth investing toward awareness and education, in the hopes of better outcomes for the coming years.

Eric Markarian

The outreach efforts in 2021 went very well! The biggest effort was for Walk of Life, where the Crescenta Valley High School Academy, a science/medicine program, had around 30 participants. Leading up to the event, I sent out flyers/informationals about the walk and held meetings for students who were interested in signing up or wanted to learn more about it. For the month of October, we allowed Academy members to use the Walk of Life as a "fieldtrip credit," which they need to fulfill their member requirements. Additionally, we had Dr. Christina Ashjian present to around 90 students (both in-person and virtually, through Zoom) at an Academy lunch presentation during Bone Marrow Month. She spoke about the role of ABMDR in general and about the upcoming Walk of Life, encouraging students to participate in it. We actually had quite a few new members join our Academy team for the walk after Dr. Ashjian's great presentation. Overall, I believe it was a fantastic year, with strong student participation from CVHS as a whole and the Academy alike!

Honoring those who perished fighting for their homeland, including ABMDR donors dedicated to saving lives

In May 2021, ABMDR took part in a national commemoration in honor of the thousands of soldiers who fell in the First and Second Artsakh Wars, including 94 young men who had joined the ranks of ABMDR.

The commemoration took place in Yerevan on May 9, the traditional date that marks Shushi Liberation Day. Every year on May 8 and May 9 and up till 2020, Armenians celebrated the liberation of Shushi and the liberation of Artsakh as a whole. In 2021, however, as the Armenian nation was reeling from the loss of Shushi and other territories, May 9 has instead become a day of remembrance and mourning.

On the morning of May 9, hundreds marched from the center of Yerevan to the Yerablur Military Cemetery. The procession culminated in a solemn commemoration at Yerablur. Event participants included the staff of the ABMDR Laboratory in Yerevan, led by ABMDR Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan, and numerous ABMDR volunteers, supporters, and registered donors.

"We mourn the devastating loss of human life caused by the Artsakh War of 2020," said ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan. "We also grieve the inconsolable loss of the 94 soldiers who had joined ABMDR. These young men are heroes for not only having fought for their homeland, but seeking to help save lives by donating their stem cells to patients in need of transplants."



Recruitment at Clinchoice

On June 30, 2021, ABMDR held a recruitment at the Clinchoice company, during which 40 supporters joined the ranks of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. The ABMDR team was led by Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan and Medical Director Dr. Mihran Nazaretyan.



Presentation at Yerevan Rotary Club

On October 20, 2021, ABMDR Executive Director Dr. Sevak Avagyan was invited to the Rotary Club of Yerevan. During the meeting with Rotary Club members, Dr. Avagyan made a presentation on ABMDR's mission, global operations, and most recent achievements.



In loving memory of my dearest friend, Arpi Barsam. — Diana Artunian



Longtime ABMDR Board member and supporter Diana Artunian (third from left, seated) with Robert Barsam (far left) and his late wife, Arpi Barsam; and fellow ABMDR Board members and supporters at the 49th Vartanantz Banquet of the Los Angeles County Tri-Lodge, 2014.



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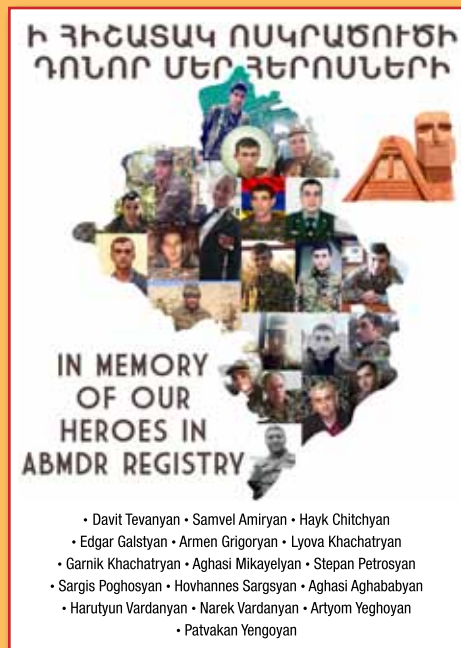


Walk of Life Los Angeles

Eighteen difficult and uncertain months following the initial COVID-19 lockdown, the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry held its 16th annual Walk of Life in Glendale, California, on September 25, 2021, in honor of the fallen heroes of the 2020 Artsakh War, including those who were in the ranks of ABMDR. The over 250 supporters who took part in the walk included elected officials, community leaders, and teams representing schools, community organizations, and individual supporters. Participating schools included Providence High School, St. Francis High School, and Crescenta Valley High School.

Opening remarks were delivered by Walkathon Committee Co-chairs Dr. Christina Ashjian and Hutch Postik. Remarks were then delivered by ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan, California State Senator Anthony Portantino, and ABMDR supporter Minella Harabidian. Senator Portantino presented a Certificate of Recognition to Dr. Jordan, in appreciation of ABMDR's dedication to serving families affected by cancer. Also, Christopher Khachadour presented the ABMDR Board members with a Certificate of Recognition, on behalf of Assemblymember Laura Friedman and the California State Assembly, honoring the life-saving mission of ABMDR.

Following Walk of Life's ribbon-cutting ceremony, at the plaza of the Glendale City building, the 5-K walk-run looped through central Glendale. The walkathon concluded at its starting point, where the festivities continued into the day. The event also gave participants the opportunity to join the ranks of ABMDR. The team with the most participants in the 2021 walkathon was the one from Providence High School, while the team that raised the most funds was Team Angel, in memory of Biurad Moghadesian.





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Thank you, our sponsors, for your invaluable support of Walk of Life: Softline Solutions; Andre and Ivette Sinani; Ella and Mila; Janet Parsanj; Los Angeles County District Supervisor Kathryn Barger; Paulette Malekian of Dilbeck Real Estate; DJ Eddy O; Turnaround Time Transcription; Rafik and Arpi Moghadesian; Carmen Lukassian; Dr. Raquel Keledjian of pH Solutions; Dr. Vergine Madelian; Providence High School; and Porto's Bakery and Café.



Walk of Life New England

On September 25, 2021, the Armenian community of New England came together in support of ABMDR's tenth annual Walk of Life in Watertown. Every year, the pan-Armenian event draws avid youth participation, with large numbers of students from area schools and colleges. It also attracts the support of numerous community organizations and many public figures.

Over the past ten years, Walk of Life in New England has received support from many businesses and organizations, including PROMETRIKA LLC of Cambridge, the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, the Armenian-American Pharmacists' Association, Watertown Savings Bank, ThermOil, Inc., several other local businesses, the Armenia Tree Project, Amaras Armenian Art Alliance, St. James Charles Mosesian Cultural and Youth Center, and the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center.

At the walkathon's opening ceremony, which was held on the grounds of the Charles Mosesian Cultural Center, ABMDR NE Committee Chair Michael Demirchian welcomed the participants. "We're touched to see many community organizations and individuals that have come together today to participate in our tenth walkathon," he said. "Some of you have been with us since day one. Thanks to supporters like you, we're raising awareness and funds for this worthy cause and saving lives across the globe." Demirchian went on to convey the committee's gratitude to the walk marshals from the Armenian Business Network, led by Jack Antounian. "In addition to joining us as marshals for the walk year after year, ABN received the ABMDR Volunteer of the Year award this year," Demirchian said.

The walk concluded at Saltonstall Park, where participants celebrated the day's achievements and enjoyed great music, dancing, and food along with those attending the annual Faire on the Square festival.

In his remarks during the closing ceremony, Shant Der Torossian of ABMDR New England extended the committee's appreciation to the event's sponsors for their continued support. "Special thanks to our new sponsors, the Hajjar Family Fund, Dr. and Mrs. Carolann and George Najarian, and the Ghahraman Family," he said. "We also want to acknowledge the support of several local businesses for their monetary and in-kind donations, including Domino's Pizza of Watertown for providing today's lunch."

Following Der Torossian's remarks, Alec Der Sirakian, Sossy Yogurtian (on behalf of the AAPA) and Miganush Stepanians of PROMETRIKA LLC were awarded the Gold (first), Silver (second), and Bronze (third) top-fund-raiser awards, respectively. For the ninth consecutive year, the Armenia Tree Project was to plant commemorative trees in Armenia in honor of the walkathon winners, as part of the #LivingCentury Initiative.

The funds raised at the walk and all other donations go a long way to ensure ABMDR is able to fulfill its mission, by educating the public, recruiting donors and thus building a robust donor registry, and facilitating bone marrow stem cell transplants for patients throughout the world.



Walkers and supporters.



Walkathon award winners.



The Walkathon Organizing Committee.

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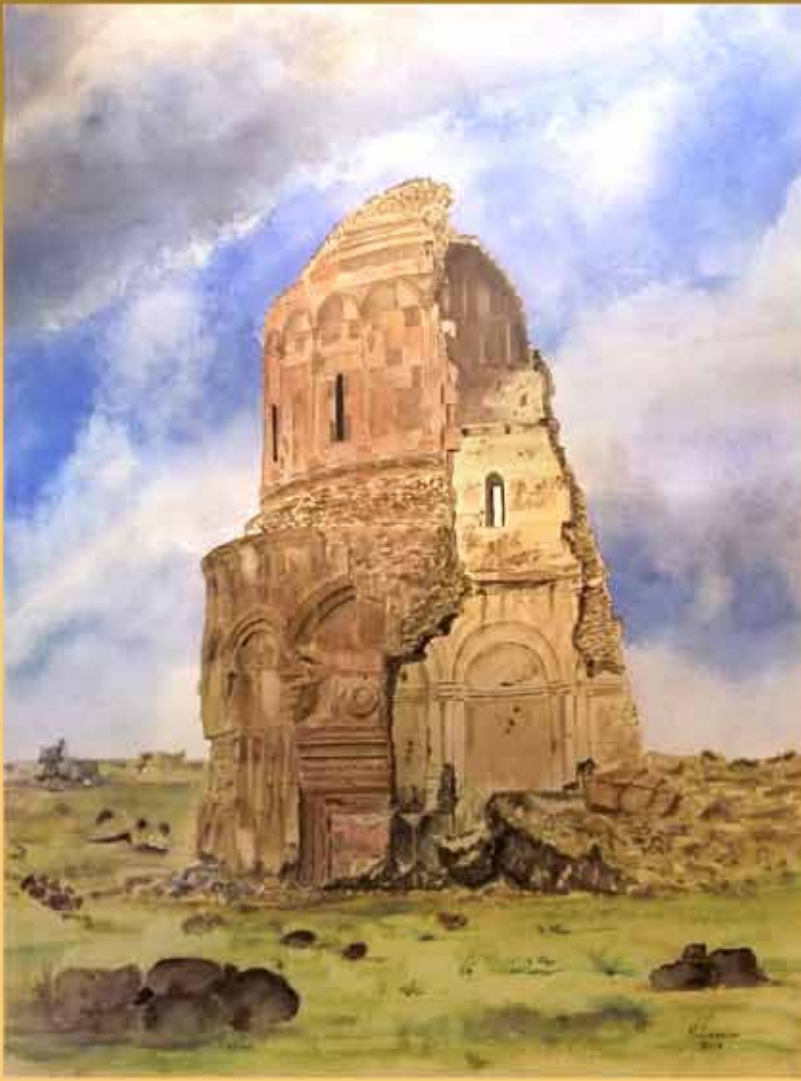
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Watercolor paintings by my remarkable husband, Hrach, created in 2015 when visiting Ani, Western Armenia.



CARMEN AND HRACH LUKASSIAN ON KTUTS ISLAND, WESTERN ARMENIA, 2015.

Meeting with Arch. Hovnan Derderian, Western Diocese, Burbank



Prayer Day at Western Diocese for ABMDR patients and families



Meeting with Bishop Torkom Donoyan, Western Prelacy, La Crescenta



Prayer Day and recruitment at Holy Cross Cathedral, Montebello



Meet our local heroes



Donor Selina.



Donor Vazrik.

Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, ABMDR made considerable strides throughout 2021 and the early part of 2022, in terms of not only continued tissue-typing, but also community outreach and recruitments. In Los Angeles, delegations of our Board met with Archbishop Hovnan Derderian of the Western Diocese and Bishop Torkom Donoyan of the Western Prelacy, continuing to build on our bond with the Armenian church. Both the Diocese and the Prelacy held special prayer days for patients and families of ABMDR, while the Prelacy prayer day, held at Holy Cross Cathedral in Montebello, functioned as a donor-recruitment event as well. In addition, our 16th annual Walk of Life functioned as a major recruitment event, and we held three recruitments specifically for one of our patients — at Christ Armenian Church, in La Crescenta; Holy Trinity Armenian Evangelical Church, in Glendale; and Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church, in Pasadena. As importantly, we rigorously continued our tissue-typing operations, while three donors, Vazrik, Selina, and an anonymous donor, were identified as potential matches for patients whose last hope of survival was to have a stem cell transplant. Thank you, our wonderful donors, for providing additional swab and blood samples for higher-resolution typing. You are all our heroes!

Recruitments in Los Angeles for local patient



Recruitments for a local patient were held in August and September 2021 at Christ Armenian Church, in La Crescenta (photos above and at right); and Holy Trinity Armenian Evangelical Church, in Glendale (all three photos below). A recruitment for the patient was also held at Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church, in Pasadena.



ABMDR Board members honored by *Business Life* Magazine



From left: Dr. Frieda Jordan, Dr. Christina Ashjian, and Arpine Zohrabayan receiving their *Business Life* awards from the magazine's publisher, John Krikorian.

At its 32nd Annual Women Achievers Awards and Leadership Symposium, *Business Life* Magazine honored ABMDR President Dr. Frieda Jordan as its 2021 Women of Influence and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. Also among the roster of women recognized as the 2021 *Business Life* Magazine Women Achievers were ABMDR Board member Dr. Christina Ashjian, and ABMDR Board member and CEO and co-founder of Feral Cosmetics Arpine Zohrabayan. The *Business Life* 32nd Annual Women Achievers Awards and Leadership Symposium was held on November 8, 2021, at Noor, in Pasadena, California.



Attendees of the festive event included family, friends, and fellow ABMDR Board members and supporters.

More than 300 supporters, including community leaders, elected officials, and representatives of various organizations, joined together for the annual Gala of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry. The Match for Life Gala, which celebrated the 22nd anniversary of the Registry, took place on the evening of August 22, 2021, at the Glendale Hilton, in Glendale, California.

In addition to functioning as a testament to the global Armenian community's support of ABMDR's life-saving mission, the Gala once again served as a jubilant occasion to mark the Registry's latest achievements. These include ABMDR's facilitation of three more bone marrow transplants, a landmark research project to understand how COVID-19 impacts ethnic Armenians, the obtainment of a prestigious grant from Britain, further international recognition of ABMDR's technical and scientific capabilities, and the organization's plans to develop a service-personnel DNA bank for Armenia and Artsakh. The Gala also encompassed the annual ABMDR Awards ceremony.

22ND



MATCH FOR LIFE GALA



Thank you, Adventist Health Glendale, for your major sponsorship of our 22nd Gala!





Congratulations, our 2021 award recipients!



Clockwise from top left: ABMDR Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Jasmen Jerahian; ABMDR Man of the Year Dr. Vicken Sepilian; ABMDR Woman of the Year Hoori Sadler; ABMDR Volunteer of the Year Carmen Lukassian; ABMDR Volunteer of the Year Armenia Sinanian; Tagui Sarkisyan accepting the ABMDR Organization of the Year Award on behalf of the Armenian American Nurses Association; and Arthur Zenian, the CEO of enBio, accepting the ABMDR Business of the Year Award. The ABMDR Organization of the Year Award was also conferred on the Armenian Business Network, of Boston.



Congratulations, our Lottery winners!

First prize winner:

VIYENA JASIK SARKISIAN

Two round-trip tickets
donated by Sidon Travel



Second prize winner:

VEM NOUBARENTZ

iPad

donated by Paulette Malekian,
Dilbeck Real Estate



Third prize winner:

AVVALIN SAFARIAN

Google Nest Hub donated by
Mr. and Mrs. Hratch and Annethe Postik

In the photo at right: nine-year-old
ABMDR angel Arthur Akopyan, seen
here with ABMDR Board member
Taleen Khatchadourian, drew our
lottery at our annual Gala in 2021.
Arthur is already a dedicated sup-
porter of our mission. He made a
personal contribution to ABMDR,
and here's what he said: "I would like
to donate \$500 from my piggy bank
to help save a life." Bravo, Arthur!
You're an inspiration to us all!



Armenian Wine Summer Soirée



ABMDR New England's Armenian Wine Summer Soirée was a fun and memorable fundraiser that was held on July 8, 2021 at the Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, in Watertown, Massachusetts. Supporters enjoyed tasting Armenian wines while socializing at this first post-pandemic Armenian community event in the city.



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ABMDR Christmas party

December 9, 2021, Glendale, California



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Dr. Ramella Markarian



Thank you, Ramella, for your key role in our partnership with Adventist Health Glendale, and for being a dedicated member of our Board of Directors.

Dr. Carolann and George Najarian



Stepan and Linda Vartanian



Amy and Michael Boyadjian



Viken and Salpi Mankerian



Zaven and Vehanoosh Grigorian



Alvart Badalian



Dr. Vergine Madelian



Tina Hartounian and Zarik Megerdichian



Drs. Avagyan and Sokurenko



It is becoming quite challenging to capture and characterize in a small paragraph the essence of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry, as nowadays the organization has expanded in many essential directions and has turned each of them into a major project in its own right. The latest example are the contributions of ABMDR scientists to clinical research. The significance of their research data has a very distinct indicator, a recent publication of an article in a prestigious, peer-reviewed journal, *Frontiers in Immunology*. And all this done in addition to the Registry's ongoing laboratory/practical/clinical work at the highest standard. Go, ABMDR! It's a pleasure to see you marching forward so well!

Dr. Arpenik Avagyan and Dr. Evgeni Sokurenko

Thank you, Dr. Vergine Madelian, for your outstanding dedication to the life-saving mission of ABMDR: for not only raising public awareness of our work through lectures and presentations, and generously sponsoring all of our events, but also designing highly artistic glass works and Christmas decorations and donating them to our fundraising events!

Lara Yeretsian and Hratch Manuelian



The printing of our Newsletter was graciously donated by Tina Hartounian and Zarik Megerdichian. Thank you, Tina and Zarik, for your truly extraordinary and generous support!

Paulette Malekian



Thank you, Paulette Malekian, for your steadfast support of our life-saving mission. We are grateful to you for being a wonderful volunteer, and for generously helping sponsor our Newsletter year after year.



Thank you, Softline Solutions, for continuing to provide ABMDR with top-notch IT support. Thanks to this wonderful company, ABMDR reaches supporters across the globe and keeps them informed of its work through a great website as well as email blasts and social media.

Selma Chapter of Triple X Fraternity

Thank you, Melene and Jack Ouzounian, and all the dedicated members of the Triple X Fraternity's Selma Chapter, for your very generous donation to the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry! Your thoughtful support makes our work all the more worthwhile. The purpose and objectives of Triple X Fraternity are to promote charity, benevolence, mental improvement, social culture, and strengthening of the bonds of friendship among its members; and to observe and adhere to the principles of truth, justice, and loyalty. Shown in the photo at right are members of the Selma Chapter after their recent meeting in Fresno, California, together with Selma's Past Grand Masters Frank Korkmazian, Sam Bagdasarian, Pete Cholakian, and Jack Ouzounian.



IN MEMORIAM

Vazken Madenlian

The ABMDR family mourns the loss of Vazken Madenlian, who passed away on March 13, 2021. A strong believer in the mission of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry, Madenlian encouraged many to join and help shape the Registry in its early days. As principal of Chamlian School, he continued his active support of our outreach efforts by inviting ABMDR Board members as commencement speakers, guest lecturers, and science judges, using them as role models to motivate his students and teach them how to set high professional goals, and how to use their gained expertise to serve the community. To help the public familiarize itself with ABMDR, Madenlian opened the school's "Culture Day" to our outreach and recruitment teams, and supported student participation in our early walkathons. In word and deed, he was a great friend and advocate of ABMDR.



Arpi Barsam

We mourn the loss of longtime ABMDR friend and supporter Arpi Barsam, who passed away on January 17, 2022. Arpi Barsam was the beloved wife of Robert Barsam, a loving mother of three, and a grandmother to seven. Arpi Barsam was an icon in the Armenian community, known for her dedication to her Armenian heritage and devotion to the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church of North America, and, particularly, St. James Armenian Apostolic Church, including the Daughters of Vartan, for over 40 years. Ever since the launch of the Armenian Bone Marrow Donor Registry and at every opportunity, Arpi was instrumental in promoting our life-saving mission among the Knights and Daughters of Vartan, tirelessly advocating for institutional support of our cause. Arpi was a remarkable woman, filled with love, extraordinary energy, and a beaming spirit, who served as an inspiration to all who knew her. We convey our condolences to her husband, 2017 ABMDR Man of the Year Robert Barsam as well as her entire family.



Thank you for in lieu of flowers

In loving memory of

- Barry Aksoy
- Anette Azizian
- Boghos Boyadjian
- Mariana Kazarian
- Emma Khudikian
- Hrach Lukassian
- Vazken Madenlian
- Gary Ohanian
- George Postik
- Vahe Shahinian
- Dr. Aida Shirinian Kaloostian
- Kevork Sultanian
- Arlene Titizian



Mariana Kazarian



Dr. Aida Shirinian Kaloostian



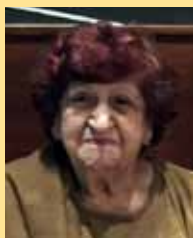
Arlene Titizian



Hrach Lukassian



Vazken Madenlian



Emma Khudikian



Boghos Boyadjian



Gary Ohanian



George Postik



Kevork Sultanian

Board meeting, October 2021



Gala Committee



Planning Retreat, March 2022



Walkathon Committee



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We are deeply grateful to artist and longtime ABMDR supporter Aramais Andonian, of Boston, for designing this issue's cover page.

We also convey our heartfelt thanks to Tina Hartounian and Zarik Megerdichian for making the printing of this issue possible.

ABMDR Newsletter designed and edited by Ishkhan Jinbashian.

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