



ARCHIVES

OF THE HUNGARIAN

MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

The official publication of the Hungarian Medical Association of America, Inc.

Volume 14, Number 1, 2006

June 2006

Dear Colleagues:

It is a great honor to be able to serve as the President of the Hungarian Medical Association of America (HMAA). If it was not for the great work and clear vision of my predecessors, we would not be where we are today. It is due to the tenacity and hard work of the founders and past presidents of our beloved society, such as Ivan Krisztinicz, Imre Magos, Irene Krisztinicz, and Sandor Matolcsy, just to name a few, that I am here today. I would like to thank each and

every member who felt it was important to "pass the torch".

At this point in time, our organization faces a critical period of transition. As the number of active first-generation members who graduated from Hungarian medical schools is diminishing over the past few years, it has become imperative that we make the effort to recruit second-generation physicians who graduated from US medical schools into the HMAA.

The HMAA has been very important to me over the years. It has and continues to be a source of friends and role models. Strong relationships cannot occur without a network of officers, board members, and committee members who despite their time constraints have dedicated themselves to the goals and vision of the HMAA. Volunteerism and altruistic behavior is so engrained in the American society that it drives our leadership and members to work together with a recently democratic Hungarian society where this behavior is now developing and taking root. This altruistic behavior is so common in the American society that it has been a foundation of all the ethnic medical societies in this country, which amount to more than 60.

However, we have often seen that our young colleagues depend on their Hungarian heritage and accept guidance and help from our members to acquire medical positions within the United States. However, as time goes on, many of them overlook and forget the need to give back to their country of origin or ethnicity. It is so important to nurture an altruistic mind set that has characterized our society. We must "pass the torch", so the less fortunate can succeed.

Also, to solidify our recruitment efforts, I would like to establish an HMAA mentorship program. This program encourages each HMAA member to sponsor a junior/resident member. In order to participate, the mentor must be a current member of the HMAA and is required to pay the dues of the junior members (\$100). Mentors will be honored on the HMAA web site, in the newsletter, and during the annual meeting with recognition at the business meeting, in the on-site program and with special name badge ribbons.

Our present HMAA programs, such as the Ivan Krisztinicz Student Exchange Program, are healthy and deserve the recognition of many individuals, such as Ivan Krisztinicz, Istvan and Agi Stadler, Katalin Mechtler, Gabriel Haas, and Eva Tamoga. The HMAA also extends its gratitude to Ilona Csaba who has been instrumental in the logistics of the day-to-day activities of the student exchange program in Buffalo. The postgraduate exchange program is also now open for new candidates. These are physicians

who have graduated from the Hungarian medical universities who are willing to spend 3 to 6 months in so-called mini-fellowships.

Another goal of the HMAA is to establish a speakers' bureau of HMAA members who are willing to lecture in Hungary. In addition we would like to develop symposiums in Hungary in conjunction with their medical societies, such as the MET.

Finally, there are 5 main objectives that I hope to work toward in my 2-year tenure:

- I. Establish a program that successfully recruits USA-trained Hungarian American physicians to the HMAA.
- II. Establish a close relationship with our colleagues in Hungary so we can assist in improving its health care.
- III. Assist HMAA members in networking with other Hungarian physicians from all over the world.
- IV. Create a firm infrastructure of the HMAA with the aid of outside funding.
- V. Continue and improve the exchange programs between the HMAA and the 4 medical universities in Hungary.

It goes without saying that these are very ambitious objectives; ones that are can only be reached with the sincere help from the executive officers, board of directors, and individual HMAA members.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Gabriel Haas, outgoing president, who has led our society with dignity, poise, and when needed strong leadership. This was especially true when Dr. Haas had to make such a difficult decision in canceling the October 2005 Sarasota scientific meeting due to a hurricane. This was a difficult and correct decision and one that was supported by the officers and board. We thank him for wise judgment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laszlo Mechtler, MD
President-HMAA

SECRETARY'S REPORT

50 years after revolution...

Most of us reading this today have been impacted by the 1956 Hungarian uprising which resulted in the mass exodus and the creation of the Hungarian diaspora. If viewed purely from a genetic point of view, it was the spread of a rare wildflower seed across the entire meadow. Not surprisingly some took root easily while other struggled to adapt.

The events of 1956 to this day serve as an example of a popular movement that rejected tyranny, rejected occupation and foretold the fall of communism. The situation was so disparate that ordinary folk became heroes, heroically sacrificing normalcy for the uncertainty of drastic change. In the looking glass of history it appears the motivations were homogenous however surely many simply went along for the ride or sought economic opportunity rather than a political agenda.

The sharp edges of those times have dulled over time even in those who suffered through the lean periods of flight. The children hear stories but have never lived such a battle. Pictures of Molotov cocktails and overturned tanks are museum pieces and Russia poses more of a threat on the Basketball court. Natural human empathy looks more softly upon the hapless Russian infantryman whose existence was much improved in the army over their impoverished peasant background. Russia is no longer the bully, his teeth fallen out from internal economic and social collapse.

Emigrants from that period were assimilated into their new surroundings. They retained their heritage but either with ease or some expected hardship they developed a second identity. This second style was now a blend of the old and the new. It was typical to reject those sympathizers who had 'allowed' the big bully to return and suppress the wishes of the people. The resignation was that "We are in a new place now. It is time to start over." Choosing to relocate in one circumstance but fleeing the violence of an oppressive autocratic regime is quite another.

A new generation was born. Bilingual parents gave birth to children that had fewer chances to practice their mother tongue except at home. Letters started falling off of names such as 'Zabo', diphthongs were separated such as 'Naggie' and 'Kovacks.' Some were curious of their origins while other preferred to remain indistinct in the melting pot. Groups such as ours rallied around heritage and profession. We were set apart because of common differences from either our neighbors or professional colleagues. There was no talk of reintegration or support for the Hungarian health care system. Indeed helping your relatives that could not or chose not to leave was a private matter.

Since that original group that lived through the threat, our group has expanded with the addition of the children of 1956 and new emigrants who went through the same struggles to change cultures but without the violent undertones. Neither of these groups have the same sharp misgivings of the old communist that capriciously stole personal property and ruled by covert and overt terror. Today they are the red team versus the blue team and although both teams may foul the pitch is much more even.

Today we easily communicate via cell phone and e-mail. We rip back and forth on several direct flights coming and going with minimal administrative hassles. The economic divide though still present has narrowed. Social and political differences remain significant however these are more easily overlooked. Indeed many now own houses in both countries. This tolerance has caused a shift in our mission. We now engage Hungarian profession societies and coordinate joint meetings. We exchange physician trainees who select from a variety of international choices. With our prosperity we can afford to devote efforts to help the less fortunate such as those Hungarian minorities oppressed by Hungary's direct neighbors.

To me the 1956 revolution is the reason I am here. At the time it was deadly serious and another flash of the mean spirit that can only be suppressed by education and familial/community support. Many martyrs were created who stood up for ideals that we all believe are right. Movies were made and passions were expressed. They were times that were larger than life.

Stories of uprising remain interwoven into the lessons taught to me by my parents. They serve as warnings to never get too comfortable, to never trust those who would like to homogenize society. "Better dead than red."

Many of those who lived through it are now old like my parents and of frail health. With their passing all direct memories of those dramatic times will fade. So why then do we continue to get together? Why do we take a precious little free time to come to Florida? It is because we are both Hungarian and other, both physician and traveler. We can assimilate but we chose to stand apart. We are fascinated by and wish to support those in Hungary and our colleagues nearby. We expect the comfort we deserve and hard-working professionals but also with a sense of purpose.

With new leadership, the HMAA continues to change in focus with further emphasis on integration programs with Hungary that simply were not possible a decade or two ago. We will continue to celebrate our own rich culture, acknowledge our professional successes and come together for a happy time with family and friends. In honor of those who have given their life sacrifice, in honor of those who chose to stand up and leave and to those who have made brave choices since then – Thank you. May the memory of 1956, now fifty short years ago, stay with us in our hearts and minds.

Tamas Peredy, M.D.



THE AUXILIARY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I am happy to announce that we once again have a very exciting year planned. Our members have been working year round to make your visit during the HMAA conference most memorable.

Our Spring meeting sprung ideas for our fall functions. We are happy to welcome our new members and continue to receive fresh ideas and suggestions gladly.

This year we are looking forward to the opening cocktail poolside reception at the Hemlsey Sandcastle Hotel, welcoming our guests with champagne and appetizers.

Our mid-week event includes a South Lido Beach Picnic a fun evening planned for all ages with hot dogs and hamburgers. Highlights of the evening include the most memorable sunset ever.

Please note there is a change to the closing reception. It will be held on THURSDAY November 2, 2006 at the Sarasota Yacht Club. Music will be provided by Zoltan Racz.

The Children's Programs will be posted. Like always, the children will go home with plenty of memories to share with their friends.

There is a slight change in the Tennis Tournament scheduling it will be held on Friday November 3, 2006. We look forward to all our competitors for the water polo, run and table tennis tournaments.

We will have our HMAA Auxiliary Board elections at our Membership Meeting. Look forward to seeing everyone there. As always, the auxiliary is open to a continuous feedback on any of our functions. Please feel free to contact myself at vargandrea@yahoo.com

Andrea E. Varga, MD



Archives of the Hungarian Medical Association of America (ISSN 1070-0773)

Published twice a year by the Association.

The Hungarian Medical Association of America is a non-profit organization of American and Canadian physicians dedicated to the furtherance of Hungarian medical traditions in America.

Editor-in-Chief of the Archives:

András Mogyorósi (amogyoro@vcu.edu)