

ESSR Outreach Course. Yerevan, Armenia, May 2017



ESSR EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF
MUSCULOSKELETAL
RADIOLOGY

The second ESSR Outreach Course took place on May 25 and 26 of 2017 in Yerevan, the capital Armenia. The local organiser of the course was Dr. Marina Aloyan, an MRI specialist at the Yerevan State Medical University. She was supported by Dr. Kostan Galumyan, the president of the Armenian Association of Radiologists and Dr. Narek Matinyan, the secretary of the Armenian Association of Radiologists.

Armenia, a small country with a population of approximately 3 million is located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East in the region of the Caucasus. Since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia has been modernizing its infrastructure and making an effort to take a more westward looking stance while maintaining its historical customs and local geopolitical ties. Despite economical and political difficulties, the current state of medicine in general, and of radiology in particular, has improved greatly over the past 25 years. However, it remains difficult for local radiologists to attend courses and conferences in Europe. For this reason, Armenia was felt to be an appropriate site for an ESSR Outreach Course.

In 2016, the Armenian Association of Radiologists was established and has a current membership of approximately 200 radiologists and nearly 50 residents. After discussion with the local organisers, and an assessment of the local needs and interests, a course program was created consisting of 3 major blocks: trauma/sports, arthritis, and tumours.

The ESSR Outreach Course was held in the modern conference room of the Armenian General Benevolent Union building in the center of the capital. Shortly after the course was announced, registration requests came flooding in and the course sold out months prior to its actual dates. Unfortunately, attendance had to be limited to 70 participants in order to insure a more intimate and interactive format. While the majority of attendees were radiologists, orthopaedists were also in attendance and their presence was noticeable during the discussions. Although the vast majority of the attendees understood and spoke English without difficulty, simultaneous translation was provided in order to insure clear communication between the speakers and attendees.

The opening ceremonies were attended by Dr. Kostan Galumyan, President of the Armenian Association of Radiologists, Dr. Garnik Avetisyan, Vice Rector of the Yerevan State Medical University and Vice President of the Armenian Association of Radiologists, and of course Dr. Marina Aloyan, the local course organizer. During the registration and introductions, the attendees were treated to wonderful musical selections performed by Gerasim Petrosyan, a jazz pianist from the Yerevan State College of Jazz. This created a relaxed and culturally rich setting for the start of the course.

Ara Kassarian, MD, FRCPC, from Madrid, Spain, who served as the faculty liaison for the course, gave the lectures and case sessions on trauma and sports. This consisted of lectures on a basic approach to imaging of trauma including the importance of appreciating the mechanism of injury and the critical role of the radiologist in searching for associated, sometimes clinically occult, injuries. Additional lectures covered more sports specific injuries and a series of interactive cases which encouraged audience participation.

Lennart Jans, MD, PhD, from Gent, Belgium, gave the lectures and cases sessions on arthritis beginning with the fundamentals of arthritis imaging and the importance of pattern recognition on radiographs. This was followed by lectures on more specific entities including spondyloarthropathies and sacroiliitis. Finally, a wide variety of cases were presented covering common and rare entities, again with an interactive format.

Prudencia Tyrrell, MD, from Oswestry, England, rounded up the trio of faculty members. Dr. Tyrrell was responsible for the tumour portion of the program. Her lectures consisted of a systematic and pattern based approach to the imaging of bone and soft tissue tumours. This was followed by a lecture on tumour mimics. Finally there was an extensive session of interactive cases involving the full range of bone and soft tissue tumours as well as tumour mimics.

Coffee breaks were held outside on the patio in the beautiful Armenian sunshine. During those breaks, the participants had the opportunity for direct contact with the course faculty and a chance to visit a small gallery with an exhibition of local artists and designers. In addition, the faculty were introduced to cultural and culinary traditions of Armenia including traditional and modern Armenian cuisine as well as the Matenadaran, the institute of ancient manuscripts with tens of thousands of impressive and well-preserved manuscripts from Armenia as well as the neighbouring regions.

The course was a tremendous success due to the excellent planning and organization of the local organizer Dr. Aloyan, and her colleagues from the Armenian Association of Radiologists. The local organisers and attendees repeatedly expressed their appreciation to the ESSR for this Outreach Program as it allowed them access to European faculty.

Respectfully submitted,

Ara Kassarian, MD, FRCPC
Madrid, Spain
May 2017