

**Tavush Women Health Project Z. Beglaryan MD, MPH, S. Anac, MD, PhD,
P. Elmassian MD, N. Hayrapetyan MBA, M. Hakobyan MD, MPH, D.
Stambouljian MD**

Introduction

Tavush Women Health Project (TWHP) was launched by FIDEC Armenia Foundation in 2010 in rural communities of Ijevan region of Armenia's Tavush Marz and ended in 2017. The project was 100% supported by generous donations from Armenian Diaspora in Argentina

Objectives

The objectives of the Tavush Women Health Project were:

- To bring free of charge breast and cervical cancer screening, STI prevention and treatment to women living in rural and peri-urban areas that do not have access to these services and in low-income communities where the access of these services is low.
- To raise awareness among women in the general public about the causes of breast and cervical cancers and the importance of breast and cervical cancer screening.
- To implement general gynecological and laboratory examination of women living in selected villages.
- To provide up-to-date treatment to women with gynecological problems.
- To provide a precedent for the implementation of national breast and cervical cancer screening programs and to increase the priority of these services on the political agenda.
- Ultimately to reduce the incidence and mortality of these two cancers.

Methods

Women aged 30-65 from rural communities of Tavush Marz passed general gynecological and laboratory examination in target villages. Free of charge treatment was provided to all women with detected reproductive health projects. Subsequently educational sessions and individual counseling on reproductive health topics (contraception methods, STI prevention, safe sexual behavior, breast self-examination, etc.) was provided by qualified gynecologists.

Results

In total 2604 women aged 35-65 passed medical evaluations between 2010 and 2017. Main problems addressed were Bacterial vaginitis 784 cases, Myoma 358 cases, Cervical ectopy 185, Cervical dysplasia 189 cases, STI 79, Mastopathy 308 cases, Polyposis 49, 5 cases of breast cancer (3 cases were diagnosed in 2016) and 1 case of uterus cancer. In total 33 women have undergone surgical treatment. During the Project complicated cases were detected that needed to be addressed immediately, which included cases of breast and uterus cancer, advanced dysplasia, metrorrhagia cases, Pelvic Inflammatory Disease and mastopathy cases. Surgeries were performed because of life-threatening medical conditions.

Overall the Women of Tavush Health Project revealed that there were practically no healthy women among the examined. The reason is the fact that women never perform preventive doctor visits, most visited the gynecologist for the last time during their last delivery or when they performed an abortion. Therefore, health problems were discovered that were present for years.

Conclusion

Tavush Women Health Project is a unique model of reproductive health and cancer screening project implemented in Ijevan region that can be replicated in other regions of Armenia. Initial medical examination provided FIDEC Armenia Foundation and the local health care facilities with valuable epidemiological data regarding women's health status. This project helped raise awareness of women on the importance of preventive gynecological care, including different aspects of reproductive health issues.