

Topic:

Epilepsy and State of Neurology in Armenia

Guest:

Berge Minassian, MD FRCPC



Dr. Minassian graduated from McGill medical school in 1992 and obtained his training in Neurology from UCLA in 1996. While at UCLA, he saw patients with Lafora disease, a fatal and the severest form of epilepsy. In 1996, he returned to Canada and trained in paediatric epilepsy with Dr. Carter Snead, and genetics with Drs. Lap-Chee Tsui and Stephen Scherer. During this training, he wrote a seminal paper on epilepsy surgery with Dr. Snead and at the same time discovered the first gene for Lafora disease. He discovered the second gene for this disease in 2003.

Dr. Minassian joined the faculty at Sick Kids and the University of Toronto in 1998 as a Neurologist-Scientist. He currently has the rank of Associate Professor. Between 1998 and now, his lab has discovered seven disease genes, including three for epilepsy. His most active research area is in the unraveling of the pathogenesis of Lafora disease. In this work, his lab has disclosed a heretofore unknown pathway of regulation of glycogen synthesis involving the Lafora disease genes. Disturbance of this pathway results in the conversion of normal glycogen to starch in human brain which underlies the intractable and fatal epilepsy in this syndrome. Dr. Minassian's group has made seminal contributions to Rett syndrome, the most common form of mental retardation in girls, and in Angelman syndrome, a second very common form of mental retardation with epilepsy. Recently, the genetic basis of an important vacuolar myopathy. His lab also discovered the first two canine epilepsy genes. Most recently, his group characterized a form of infantile Parkinson's disease, discovered the disease gene, and from that knowledge identified a cure for these patients.



Vicken Sepilian, MD FACOG

"Your Health" host Dr. Vicken Sepilian currently serves as the President of the Armenian American Medical Society. He is board-certified in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, as well as Obstetrics and Gynecology. He completed his residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology at Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia and his fellowship in Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility at the University of Texas. Dr. Sepilian currently practices in Los Angeles and in Glendale.

Featuring physicians and health care professionals whose areas of practice cover the entire spectrum of allied health care, "Your Health" is a dynamic resource for viewers interested in improving their health. The program emphasizes the importance of preventative care, and focuses on how people can maintain a healthful lifestyle. The program provides an opportunity for the Armenian community to address their concerns with the counsel of bi-lingual health care professionals. The program also provides viewers with information about the AAMS and our activities in California and Armenia. The AAMS encourages individuals to contact local social workers to learn whether they are eligible for health insurance. AAMS doctors and nurses encourage their patients to get the insurance they deserve, and to see a physician regularly for the care that they need.