



COUNTRY

DOCTOR





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IRENE SHOTADZE

Rector

Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy

LEARN TO SERVE, LIVE TO LOVE!

Tbilisi Medical Academy, which was established by my late father, Professor Petre Shotadze back in 1992 with the support of his colleagues from the Tbilisi State Institute of Postgraduate Education for Physicians celebrates its 30th anniversary. My father's entire life was closely intertwined with his scientific activities and unconditional love towards his profession.

Hence, as a result of his innovative and progressive decisions at that time, today, 30 years later, we are getting at the closest proximity to the original Mission Statement - becoming a student-centred Higher Education Institution, where through innovative approaches and provided evidence-based knowledge, students will further serve to community and their well-being, as well as contribute to development of medicine and field of healthcare in general.

From the very first day of establishing to the present, our primary objective is to maintain the fundamental values, as well as improvement

First years, when the Academy started to take its first steps towards development, coincided with the period of living in the United States of America with my family; however, years after my father's death, we decided to return to Georgia and continue his educational work, through maintaining his traditions and approaches.

Simultaneously to revising the Strategic Development Plan and ensuring its further implementation, in the first place, we started preparations to meet international standards of medical education. The collective desire for institutional development has united and brought together administrative staff, academic personnel and students, which in its turn set rather higher targets for progress and development. Hereby I also want to express gratitude towards each and every person, who, side by side with my father, contributed to the development of Tbilisi Medical Academy from the first days of its establishment.

All of us had a firm belief in the progress of Academy, though we all understood that on the road towards advancing to the international standards, we would have to face and overcome an abundance of challenges. With the continuous support of my family, spouse, as well as colleagues and associates, we have been able to introduce a number of innovations, disseminate some of the best international practices and adopt the most up-to-date methods of teaching and learning.



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Our main goal is to maintain the fundamental values from the very first day of establishing to present days, as well as enhance and develop further quality culture

The process in its turn clearly outlined the need to recruit new staff, refresh infrastructure for studies, modernise laboratory equipment and establish clinical skills teaching centre. These processes, once again convinced all of us that the pursuit of innovation and progress requires fulfilment of specific obligations, which in its turn will bring us closer to international standards and facilitate the implementation of best practices. With united efforts, TMA successfully underwent the authorisation process in accordance with the updated educational standards in 2018. Meanwhile, new challenges followed step by step and in 2020 TMA obtained 7-year





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I believe that the strive
towards success will continue at a
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more stories to tell to our audience

accreditation of educational programmes in accordance with the updated standards of medical education. It is noteworthy that the accreditation process was led by an expert from the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME). Our progress and each step taken forward is a result of joint commitment and tireless effort; and nowadays we are engaged in active partnerships with more than 20 international universities. Together with its international partner universities, Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy has established multiple centres of diverse attractions, so within frames of international cooperation agreements, the students can spend a semester at the leading medical universities of Spain, Italy, Belgium, Turkey, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Czech Republic. In 2020 we won one of the biggest grant competitions for institutional cooperation, under Erasmus+ programme. Tbilisi Medical Academy headed the consortia, which brought together 9 universities from the Eastern Partnership region, European Union and of course, Georgia. The project in its turn considers implementation of innovations in medical education, as well as dissemination of current experiences and enhancement of clinical lines through implementation of modern approaches.

„I believe that our progress towards success will re-



main in a rapid pace and we will have far more success stories to share with the audience”.

This year, Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy celebrates its 30 years of anniversary from its establishment with around 3000 alumni, innovative approaches in teaching and construction of a new outpatient clinic. After 30 years of history, we purchased land in Tbilisi, where we plan to build a clinic. Soon we will start the construction of the clinic and provide students with an unique opportunity to obtain clinical education and practical skills at the TMA clinic. We believe that effective communication and transdisciplinary approach towards tasks is one of the crucial elements for modern physicians. We promote development of convenient environment and convenient environment, which are necessary for learning. With the support of the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation of Georgia, we have been implementing the project “Medicine and Art” for several years now, which in its turn aims to promote and encourage scientific activities among youth.

Within frames of events, dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of TMA, we present to the audience a new project “Six Days of Doctor” through student-centred, individual and extraordinary activity, where future doctors through photography and visual arts tell the stories of doctors in



Skhalta, Khulo and Ghorjomi. To tell the truth, in the beginning of the project, one of the things that ran through my mind was the story of my father, when he took the most distinguished physicians from Tbilisi to his home village Chkhari. Thinking about this project brought back all the emotions which were approaching at that time and this is when I knew what an outstanding thing we would do together with the author of the project.



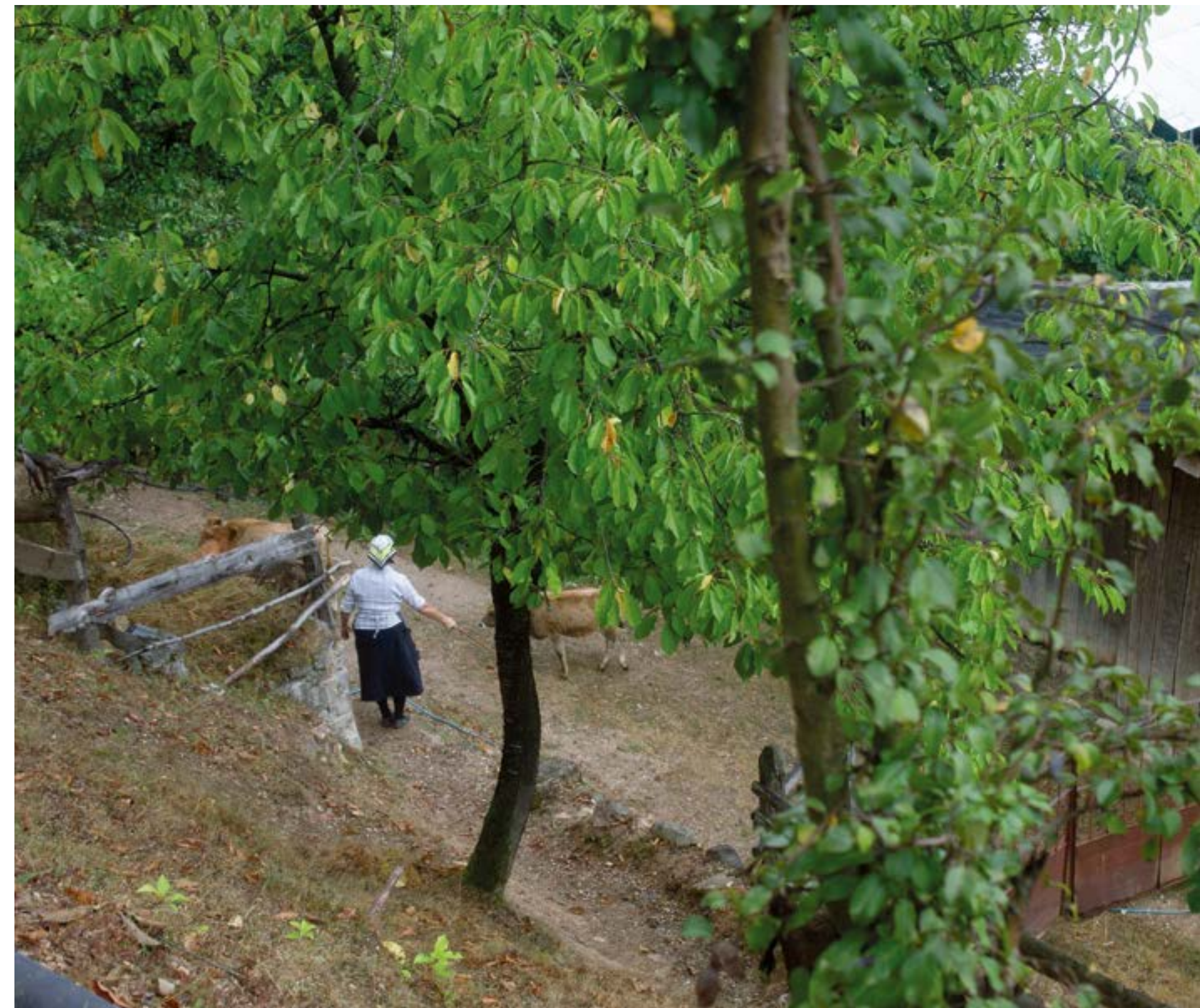
COUNTRY DOCTOR

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Does concurrence of medicine and art provide understanding of complex issues, such as medical professionalism? In order to provide an answer to this question, Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy (TMA) delivered an innovative, extraordinary and transdisciplinary photography project for students under title “Six Days of Country Doctor”. Within frames of the project six students participated in an expedition, which took place on three locations in Adjara highlands, namely in Skhalta, Ghorjomi and Khulo, where during one week they shadowed and documented on their cameras everyday work of local village doctors. The unique touch of this initiative lies in the fact that future doctors were able to observe and shadow the work of village doctors from the side, envision and highlight their role and reflect the process of their everyday work on a tape. The project, which echoes the institutional culture and mission of TMA, aims to raise awareness towards physicians working in the highlands of Georgia on one hand, as well as facilitate increased motivation among young physicians for working in the rural areas of the country.

During the first phase of the project, students got introduced to the basics of photography and went through a two-month long preparatory course with the author and one of the leading photographers of the country - Leli Blagonravova; while also mastered the general principles and techniques of visual storytelling and writing.

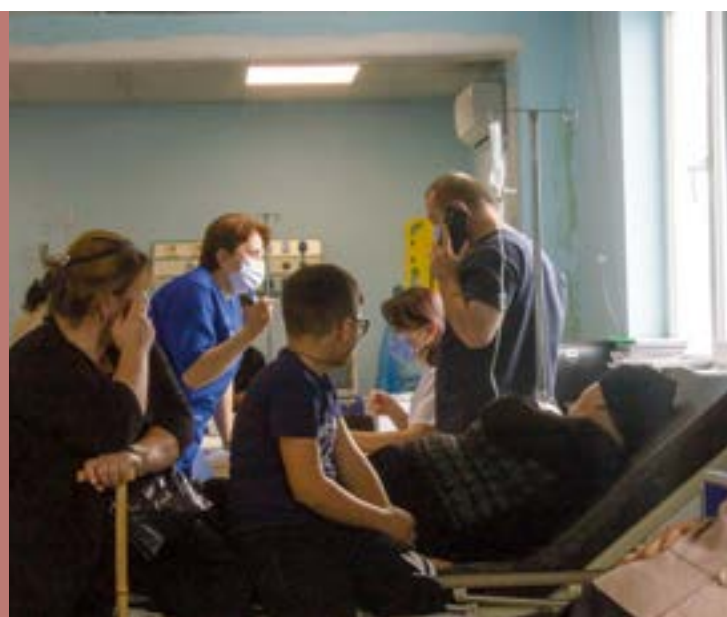
SKHALTA



NANUKA KATCHIURI
ELENE GUBELADZE

DOCTOR EDO

People living in Skhalta, a small picturesque village in the Highlands of Adjara, wrapped around with mountains and cover of fog, are hospitable and keen to maintain their traditions. Skhalta is home to people of two confessions; this is a place where Georgian Muslims and Orthodox Christians live together. One of the most significant landmarks of the nature of Skhalta valley is the Church of Skhalta, built in the Golden Age of Georgian history, during the reign of Tamar the Great. Here, the love of the village doctor is just as striking as the picturesque nature of the valley.



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In doctor Edo's office lingered a homely ambience. He and his wife shared the work, in order to handle all of it

The reality at the village outpatient centre appeared to be far from what we may have imagined beforehand. To our surprise, the building which looked abandoned in the beginning, turned out to be the outpatient clinic, where patients were treated. The building was divided into three completely different parts: kindergarten, outpatient clinic and the accommodation for the doctors. Once a paediatric department of the hospital, now was a deserted part of the building with shattered wooden windows and plastic bags, to cover them up. A rather homely ambience lingered in doctor Edos' working room. He and his wife used to share the work, in order to get through all of it during the day. Doctor Edo mostly used to speak with the patients on the telephone, while his wife completed the paperwork. The line of patients of different age and diagnosis used to replace one after another, creating a stream of uninterrupted calls, where the telephone never stopped ringing. Another surprising discovery at the outpatient clinic for us was a telemedicine device. Through this device, patients were able to consult with the physicians in the major cities around various health related issues and concerns without leaving their home villages. This method happens to be rather convenient and budget friendly for the local population. Great love and respect of the local population towards their physicians was clearly affirmed by the cheerful attitudes of children, who were brought for vaccination.

The road, which local doctors have to take in order to reach their patients, was very hard and challenging. Mostly it was hard to even imagine that it would be possible to reach the destination.



Our way to Kvatia was surrounded by breathtaking views and even though fog covered the mountains, one could still see the houses here and there. The narrow road, which led to the patient's house and was surrounded by trees and fog, turned out to be truly magical. On the way to the house we met with Valeri, eldest son of the patient, who jokingly said to doctor Edo: "There's nothing wrong with my father for sure, he'll be happy by just seeing you". The lens of the camera captures patients, waiting for the physician in front of their houses. In the eyes of doctor Edo, one can clearly read empathy, while he communicates with his patients. Almost similar scenes were observed during each visit; a wood-burning stove with a jug of milk over, which had just come to boiling and infused the room with its' specific sweet and mellow scent. Once seeing the doctor, patients were starting to fuss around and each farewell strengthened further the compassion, which the doctor expressed towards his patients. The village doctors are clearly heroes with unique missions; they fight for the lives of their patients, while going through complicated roads, full of obstructions.

GHORJOMI

NINO GAGUA
MARIAM MAMISASHVILI



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Patients of different ages and diagnoses
followed one another in the lens of the
camera



DOCTOR MZIA

Highland Adjara, two-storey houses wrapped with spruce-fir forestry, mosques and misty mountains. For the inhabitants of the village of Ghorjomi, a physician serves as a source of hope, while the relationship between doctor and patient is art. Prior to our first meeting, we were rather overwhelmed and thousands of thoughts alternated in our minds. The patients were waiting for the doctors while our camera lenses were directed towards doctor Mzia.

Usually, the village doctors are the ones who go to their patients themselves. Very often the road, which the physicians have to go before they get to their patients is rather tough, however the emotions received at the place of destination outweigh all the difficulties of the road.

As the car stops in front of the window, the patient appears standing behind the curtains. The scene of greeting was rather unfamiliar to us. Prior to starting her professional duties, doctor Mzia used to become a companion of patient's news beyond their health conditions. “Grandpa”, this was how she addressed her patient, making the relationship between them more homely and family-like. We could not explain how communication between the physician and patient could contain such a large amount of positive emotions. With quick movements of fingers, we carried on taking pictures.

Doctor Mzia took off her stethoscope and started to explain the patient's diagnosis. Here we could clearly see her efforts while trying to prevent her emotions from influencing her; and the way she carried on with her work in an usual manner. As the doctor was giving guidance and prescriptions to the patient, we noticed the excited movement of the family members in the room, while trying to express attention and love towards her every single moment. Doctor Mzia could not resist a cup of coffee, which had just come to boil on the wood-burning stove. Here she was considered to be more than just a doctor, this gesture had additional significance to the patient. Rather special form of love was apparent in the process of communication. We're running short in time so we have to hit the road to another patient. During our trip we keep thinking about recent scenes while one particular phrase keeps running through our minds: “Have you ever seen someone waiting for the doctor with such

anticipation and happiness?”... We agree with this statement and silently, in our minds, confirm to ourselves: in our reality, the village doctor is a hero indeed!

Patients of different ages and diagnoses followed one after another in the lens of the photo camera, as we kept our journey together with doctor Mzia. Our next patient was diagnosed with Schizophrenia. Prior to the meeting controversial thoughts and emotions were clashing with one another. We didn't know how we, as strangers, would be received and whether they would like to have their stories reflected on the film. We were rather nervous, however all of our worries started to fade away in an instant, as the scene in front of us took an unbelievable turn. The patient, previously refusing to get out of bed, would immediately become full of hope and eyes would get filled with sparkles upon the appearance of doctor Mzia. As the night changed the day, we gathered for farewell at the outpatient clinic in the centre of Ghorjomi. Doctor Mzia gave us a small tour around the facility and took us to her work office, where our gazes got attracted to the corner, where doctor Mzia kept small gifts from her patients on display. They are symbolic, however each of them carries enormous amounts of love and respect. Our eyes fell on one of them, a flower carved out of wood, with dedication to the “Best Physician in the World”. After all, the universe is created by people and meeting these people, creators of the world, getting to know their lifestyle and reflecting their everyday lives on the film was a very valuable and pleasant experience to each of us. Altogether, we could clearly see everything that we have always been taught, we observed and reflected to ourselves how the doctors interacted with the patients and how they cared for them.



Ghorjomi is a picturesque place in the highlands of Adjara, with its significant architecture and authentic lifestyle, which one could also call “Adjarian”. In the centre of the village stands the main landmark of the village; an impressive five-domed wooden Mosque. Also nearby stands the outpatient clinic. Here, the village doctors are main action heroes, covering roads, full of obstacles to their patients even in the longest and coldest winter days.



DOCTOR MAIA

Our photo cameras are getting ready to capture doctor Maia and her patients. The place where we meet in the beginning is the outpatient clinic in the centre of the village. Doctor Maia collects necessary medical equipment and we take a drive through a narrow path. The reality, which brought fear to us, was an usual daily episode for her. Driving on country roads is very difficult, unless one is an experienced driver.



Our car stops at every house, rather different from one another, where the hosts show different forms of love and respect towards physicians. The patient at one of them is an elderly woman, with Parkinson’s Disease. The doctor provides the patient with directions and guidance, so she can receive proper treatment and move on to the next house. The next patient was also affected with the same disease, however in a rather milder form. As we rapidly switched the film from one shot to another, we witnessed the unconditional triumph of empathy in the face of communication between doctor and patient. Doctor Maia has been a village doctor for eight years already and, as she says, serves the local residents. Her everyday routine is consistent - home, outpatient clinic and back. At the outpatient clinic one can meet the patients waiting. The children were getting ready for vaccination, while elderly patients were waiting for transfusions. “Transfusion..., vaccination..., please measure my blood pressure...; my



husband has high blood sugar...” was a common way of line-up among the patient’s voices.

According to the characteristic traditions of the region, a guest is expected to take shoes off and leave them outside prior to entering the house. However, while visiting the patients we noticed that each host was trying to keep the doctor from leaving the shoes outside.

Everything that we witnessed with our eyes stimulated different impressions - emotions of anticipation and how keen were the patients to see the doctors, as well as the physician’s commitment while taking complicated roads towards their patients; - unrelenting love for their profession and endless energy to make life of people a little better. In the Highlands of Adjara, once one becomes a participant of local physician’s activities, even a few hours are sufficient to experience and feel all of this.



DOCTOR ROENA

Away from the crowds and lifestyle of Batumi, distanced by a four-hour journey to the mountains is hidden the picturesque village of Ghorjomi. Along the way the beautiful landscapes change one another and finally, a five-domed wooden Mosque with its spacious prayer hall appears in the spotlight of our camera lenses. Looking forward to experiencing new adventures and getting new emotions, we are getting ready to visit patients together with doctor Roena.

The place of meeting was once again the outpatient clinic in the centre of the village. This time, we were accompanied by nurse Alexandre. We picked up all the necessary equipment and took off to the patients. The road was getting more and more challenging, which scared the doctor as well, however, no sense of fear can beat the emotions of the patients, ignited with hope, who meet you at the end of the trip. In the house we were greeted by an elderly couple, as turned out later, husband and wife. Elderly man had cancer and glaucoma, which has led to vision loss. His elderly wife was taking care, while herself suffering from high blood pressure. Behind the bodies of the seniors we could yet see youthful boy and girl. As soon as they saw doctor Roena, their eyes blazed with flames of hope. Meanwhile doctor Roena's telephone kept ringing uninterruptedly, some of the callers were seeking guidance and advice, while others confirming appointments.

Farewells with each patient were emotional and hard for us. Tangled up in our own thoughts and loaded with emotions, we were leaving the gates of patient's homes full of happiness. The feelings which we experienced here and unconditional love towards the village doctor is hard to compare to anything. Here we once again clearly understood that being a doctor is much more than just a profession. At the end of the journey we wanted to show these people to the whole country, so they could also see the love, devotion and kindness, by which they unconditionally serve their profession.

The days which we spent alongside village doctors will remain some of the best periods of our lives. We spent days shadowing three remarkable doctors, which irrespective to different characters and contrasting personalities had one thing in common - love towards people and their profession.

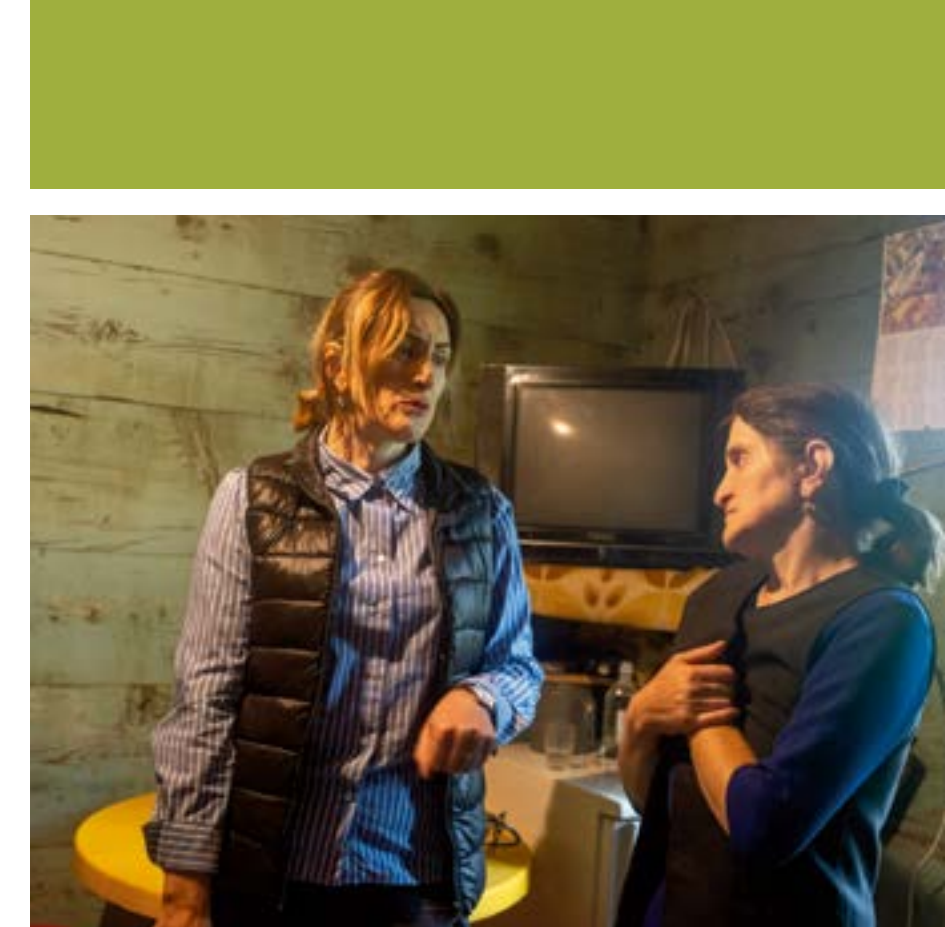


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Beautiful region of Adjara, Khulo is a municipality, which is densely populated with Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The sounds of prayers were often heard from the Mosque and numerous times we've seen local residents starting to pray

DOCTORS
SHORENA AND TAMILA

Medicine and art are united with a common goal: to search and see the things, which are not easily visible to the common eye, strive towards idealistic maxims and perfectionism. We were able to understand and comprehend this only once we started our journey on the road to the highlands of Adjara, in order to capture the village doctors on film. Khulo is a municipality, which is densely populated with Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The sounds of prayers were often heard from the Mosque and numerous times we've seen local residents starting to pray. Different religions facilitated the development of a favourable environment for establishing diverse culture and traditions. Such an environment in its turn enhanced local residents' respect towards one another's rules and customs. Here, the village doctor is an entrusted person, who helps people with a great sense of responsibility and motivation. There are in total 8 doctors in Khulo, however we are going to share the stories of two remarkable women, doctors: Shorena and Tamila. Getting to the outpatient clinic from the centre of Khulo took approximately 50 minutes. There we met two nurses, who provided doctors with information regarding the number of incoming patients, as well as updates regarding which patients should've been visited and where. Only two rooms are allocated for the physicians within the outpatient clinic, however during cold, freezing days, due to having one wood-burning oven only, all of them worked in one room. Tamila and Shorena were often together during their shifts as well, however visits towards serious patients they were taking separately. Their roads were separated in accordance to the villages and their geographical locations. Shorena, 43 is a Family Physician by specialisation. During the last 18 years, she has worked everywhere: - at the outpatient clinic, ambulance and hospital. Here communication between physician and patient is taken to another level. It is extremely hard to describe the extent of warmth and love, by which the patients welcome the "saviours", visiting their homes and what amount of respect is expressed towards each of the doctors. One may falsely assume here that the communication process implies discussion of symptoms only. Here one becomes part of all sorts of news. With swift finger movements we are trying to capture each scene on the film. From time to time doctor Shorena tells us stories, which sound anything but believable, however they represent her reality. One time, as told by her, due to the harsh winter climate and tough roads she had to tie her pregnant patient to the sleigh with an adhesive tape and deliver her to the clinic all by herself. Can someone even believe this? Is it among the human powers to take such a road, completely covered by snow, in the middle of the night? And run kilometres under such conditions while everyone else is tucked in tightly and sleeping peacefully in their homes, as you fight relentlessly for the birth of a



new life... However, “this is Khulo.. and you can’t act otherwise.. here you have to accommodate to local rules and customs” - says doctor Shorena.

Tamila was a self-contained, calm and emotionally stable person. The openness and warm demeanour facilitated building trust with the patients. She was eagerly transferring knowledge, sharing love, energy and experience. Local patients had a rather different, warm attitude towards their physicians and their relationships were also remarkable. Once a week they used to meet at an appointed time. One would frequently hear “look, my girl has arrived”... “my beautiful girl”... For those people their doctors were more than just providers of treatment. “We are one family, there are no boundaries between us” - used to say doctor Tamila. Another problem, which the village doctors



“**„Look, my girl has arrived”... “my beautiful girl”... For those people their doctors were more than just providers of treatment**

had to face in addition to the obstructions on the road, was the shortage of medical equipment. Even though the physicians had relevant equipment for trauma patients, shock management and stable patients, these tools, even though they are helpful for treatment, are hardly effective in extremely severe cases, when hospitalisation to another, better equipped facility is required.

Beyond professional development of the village, doctors were standing by their experience, practical skills and personal qualities, which at the end served as main means for handling their important work, full of responsibility.

This trip to the highlands of Adjara was diverse and emotionally loaded to each of us. Even before the trip, we always knew why we wanted to be doctors in the first place, but now we can clearly see where we are needed most.



Photo: Guram Muradov

LELI BLAGONRAVOVA

Photographer

SIX DAYS OF COUNTRY DOCTOR

The common bond, which unites medicine and photography is trust. Science helps us to understand fundamental actions, which drive the human body and mind, however in order to understand things, such as love, hate, perseverance, heroism and hope, we need to take a look beyond science, with a photo camera in our hands. It is indeed art that provides an unique window to understand the connection between one's self and another human's condition. Such trust provides benefits, and this is how the future doctors captured on the film daily lives of the village doctors from Adjarian highlands.

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Management of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy provided tremendous support to this project and this is how photography and medicine crossed one another

Where did the idea to organise such project as “Six Days of a Country Doctor” arise?

- Well, it's been almost two decades since I have been teaching photography to students and this idea is also related to the creative process of preparing study materials for the students. I remember quite clearly how I encountered the works of William Eugene Smith, one of the most notable photo documentalists, “The Country Doctor”, which tells us the story of Dr. Ernest Ceriani, a physician from Kremmling, Colorado, his everyday life, battle against diseases, successes and failures and his heroism in general. This project was brought to life by W. Eugene Smith in 1948. These photos made a colossal impression on me and eventually became the main



inspiration to document on film the story of the village doctor in our reality as well. This idea has been meant to become a project for many years. The management of Petre Shotadze Tbilisi Medical Academy provided tremendous support to this project and this is how photography and medicine crossed one another. The most emotional thing in this story for me is the fact that the main creators behind the project are the students of Tbilisi Medical Academy, who beautifully captured the daily activities of their future colleagues on film. And hence, this project brought together and combined two professions in an unique way.





How did the project start and what were its first steps?

- One of the most interesting things that served as foundation for the project was the background research, which I conducted before the official start of the project. Last summer I travelled to the Highland Adjara and with the help of my friends met and photographed doctors: Rezo Takidze, Gizo Gorgiladze and Anzor Broladze, who provided great support, so the students could film the lives of village doctors. First of all, this idea was supported by Tbilisi Medical Academy and subsequently the students, willing to study photography, got included in the project.

Prior to departure to the Highland Adjara, where students would start working on this project, we organised a three-month study course, during which these students learnt photography and visual storytelling techniques, so they could deliver the stories of village doctors to the audience.

And yet, why did you choose Highland Adjara as the main place for conducting this project?

- This part of Adjara is a rather close and familiar place for me. When you are implementing such a project, each detail and expectation should be considered in advance, including potential risks. Therefore while taking the first steps, I wanted to be in a familiar environment so the project could eventually come out as envisioned.

Now, from today's perspective, after the project has already seen the light, I can say with confidence that this project can be implemented not only in the highlands of Adjara, but across all parts of Georgia.

It seems that implementation of the project revealed many new details to you, as well as served as a ground to look at it from new perspectives. What do you think, what are the similarities between the professions of doctor and photographer?

- First and the most important thing that both professions share in common is the need to obtain trust, which directly reflects on the outcome. It is necessary to trust a photographer, similarly to the way we trust a doctor, because if there is no trust, nothing will work. And last, but not least, for the representatives of both professions, it is equally important to listen, observe and gain trust, which significantly affects the outcome.



During the project, it turned out that photographers and doctors have much more in common than one may imagine



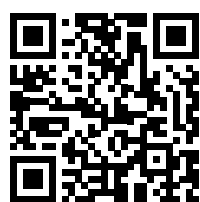
What served as the main challenge while working on the project?

- The project itself, along with its challenges turned out to be exceptionally interesting. Each detail should have been carefully considered and addressed in advance, so we could explain to the students what and how to film after their arrival. Yet the biggest challenge in my opinion was to make sure that after all of this hard work and generating such an incredible amount of material, none of the photos were left out beyond well-deserved exposure. I think at the end we were able to convert even this challenge into an opportunity and brought the photos to a wider audience.

And for the last question, how do you think the connection was established, which was your initial objective at the beginning of the project?

- Now, from today's perspective, I can proudly, boldly and loudly state that the end results of the project exceeded its initial plan, while introducing the scope and significance of this project from an even greater perspective. As for now, the manifesto in support of the village doctors will keep on going further. There are many doctors in different regions of the country, whose stories are yet to be introduced to the wider audience.





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