TUBE TOPS: A TV show featuring Drs. Ira Byock and Elliott Fisher of DMS has won a George Foster Peabody Award for excellence in journalism and been nominated for an Emmy. The show, on *60 Minutes*, was titled "The Cost of Dying."

THEN & NOW

A reminder of the pace of change, and of timeless truths, from a 1991 history of Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital, which opened in 1893:

"Until well into the 20th century, hospitals weren't considered a proper place to have a baby; respectable women had their children at home. No exception to the rule, Mary Hitchcock was open for two years before the first baby was born within its walls, and until 1920 the hospital's exquisitely detailed annual reports . . . did not even bother to detail the specific number of births. Not even the hospital's own medical staff . . . saw the institution as a fit place to give birth."

1,135

Births at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in fiscal year 2009

DMS exports its measurement methodologies

DMS researchers have become well known throughout the United States for their measurement of usage patterns within the health-care system. Now they're helping to develop similar efforts in other countries, including the small, newly independent nation of Kosovo.

Ties: In 1999, DMS's Dr. James Strickler began working, under the auspices of the International Rescue Committee, with refugees from the Serbian conflict in Kosovo. Since then, he has led a number of initiatives that have forged strong ties between DMS and Kosovo, including student exchanges.

In 2009, Hoxha returned to DMS from Kosovo as a Fulbright Scholar.

In 2003, a medical student named Ilir Hoxha was one of the Kosovars who visited DMS. The contacts he made at Dartmouth sparked his interest in health-care economics and policy, so Strickler encouraged him to apply for a grant to study at the Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice (TDI). In 2009, Hoxha returned to DMS as a Fulbright Scholar and spent four months working with TDI faculty. His aim was to assess whether the methods developed there to study the U.S. health-care system could be applied to Kosovo.

Skeptical: Dr. David Goodman, the director of TDI's Center for Health Policy Research, worked closely with Hoxha. At first, Goodman says, he was a little skeptical of the idea of using TDI's methodologies in Kosovo because of the country's extremely limited resources.

But Hoxha was confident that studying variations in health care was essential in Kosovo, which is still early in the process of rebuilding its health-care system following its decimation during the war. "For a country with few resources, the study of efficient use of resources becomes even more important," he says.

Goodman soon agreed. "In under-resourced countries, small measurements may have very big effects, because the needs are great," he says. "If you start building it in now, you gain benefit as you start reconstructing the health-care system."

Andrew Goodman, a 2010 graduate of the M.P.H. program at TDI (and David Goodman's son), was likewise interested in studying health-care variations in Kosovo, but he had two questions: First, were Kosovar physicians interested in studying variations in the practice of medicine? And second, how much did they already know about the concept? With the help of Hoxha and TDI faculty members, he drafted a survey to answer those questions.

Nuances: After developing the draft, Andrew Goodman spent three weeks in Kosovo this past spring, meeting with physicians and policymakers to get their feedback on the survey. He used their comments and suggestions to hone it, ensuring that it was sensitive to cultural nuances and that the concept of variation was explained clearly.

He and Hoxha had anticipated that knowledge of health-care variations would be quite low,

Everything in Kosovo's health-care system, from the ambulances that ply the streets of Pristina to the infrastructure in the country's hospitals, needs to be rebuilt.

but what they found surprised them. "People are more aware of it than you'd think," Andrew Goodman says. "There was a tremendous amount of interest in learning more."

Critical: Their next step is to disseminate the survey on a large scale. "This is a very critical time for the health-care system," says Andrew Goodman. "The physicians there are amazing people. . . . But there is a lack of feedback."

Hoxha, who is now back in Kosovo, plans to develop reports on the health-care system there similar to those issued by TDI, starting by focusing on the care of mothers and infants.

Strickler is glad to see Hoxha working with TDI. "Kosovo desperately needs the kinds of studies of the health-care system that TDI does," he says. "Those studies should lead to the development of cost-efficient health-care programs."

Dartmouth continues to develop connections to Kosovo in other areas as well. Dr. Bujar Bukoshi, Kosovo's minister of health, spent a week in early September at DMS.

And Dr. Michael Zubkoff, chair of DMS's Department of Community and Family Medicine, was recently named to the board of trustees of American University in Kosovo.

Rebuild: "What you want to do," Zubkoff says, referring to Dartmouth's role in Kosovo, "is help them rebuild their own infrastructure. You want to help them retool and take control of their own destiny."

Amos Esty

INVESTIGATOR INSIGHT

In this section, we highlight the human side of biomedical investigation, putting a few questions to a researcher at DMS-DHMC.

Anikó Náray-Fejes-Tóth, M.D.
Professor of Physiology

Náray-Fejes-Tóth, a molecular endocrinologist, studies the cellular and molecular mechanisms by which steroid hormones regulate kidney function and blood pressure. She has been at DMS for 20 years.

How did you become interested in physiology?

While I was a medical student at Semmelweis University in Hungary, I interned (evenings, nights, and weekends) in a biochemistry lab and fell in love with science. Thus after obtaining my M.D., I returned to the lab and became a full-time researcher. The term physiology as we think of it today is much broader than most people would assume. It involves all aspects of "how things work," at the organism level as well as in cells and at the molecular level.

Can you describe your research?

My main interest is to find out how hormones—steroid hormones in particular—work at the physiological, cellular, and molecular levels. My latest research is to determine the role of aldosterone in a widespread condition called metabolic syndrome. It includes obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and dyslipidemia. We are using transgenic and knockout mouse models to try to determine the mechanisms by which steroid hormones contribute to this group of diseases.

What is the greatest frustration in your work? And the greatest joy?

Frustration? When I have to spend time dealing with red tape. Joy? When experiments work and my students are becoming good scientists.

What famous person, living or dead, would you most like to meet?

Robert E. Lee. Having grown up in Europe, I am fascinated with American history, in particular the Civil War. Lee's giant and controversial figure stands out. If I could have a second pick, it would be Abraham Lincoln.

What's your favorite nonwork activity?

I love sailing, biking, hiking, skiing, gardening, cooking, baking—I wish I just had more time.

Do you always have a working hypothesis in the lab?

I always have hypotheses, but they are not always working out.

What advice would you offer to someone new in your field?

Do not do this unless you totally *love* it. The idea that science is a glamorous thing and you just have brilliant ideas and everything else falls in place is not true. It's hard work, and things work maybe 20 percent of the time, at best—but that 20 percent is *great*.

Finish this sentence: If I had more time I would . . .

I would do everything that I do now, except *much* slower, maybe at one third of the speed I am going now. I would also like to do some volunteer work.

What is a talent you wish you had?

Just one? Patience. If I could wish for two, I would also include playing the piano.

When you were very young what did you want to be?

Archaeologist, doctor, gymnast, doctor, chemist, doctor, in this order, if I remember. Well, at least some of it worked out!

Who has most inspired your work?

Géza, my husband. He is terrific.

What is your most memorable accomplishment?

My mom would never believe it, but I actually cook well. My friends always demand my Hungarian goulash; that's a hit no matter what. My colleagues might also mention some of our scientific discoveries, but in those I was lucky.