



# SAMS

Vol 12 | May 2026

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



### Restoring Hearts Through Medical Milestones



### *April Medical Mission: Restoring Heart Rhythm in Syria*

Throughout April, SAMS conducted a multi-site medical mission across Syria, delivering advanced surgical care, strengthening clinical capacity, and expanding access to lifesaving cardiology and vascular services.

At the SAMS Heart Hospital in Idlib, teams performed a high volume of complex procedures. In cardiothoracic surgery, Dr. Hazaim Alwair and Dr. Bakri Kaakeh, alongside Dr. Wafai, completed 15 major open-heart surgeries, including valve replacements, aortic root procedures, and coronary artery bypass operations, in addition to 48 outpatient consultations.

The cardiac electrophysiology team, Dr. Waddah Maskoun, Dr. Mohammad Homsy, and Dr. Ghiyath Tabbal, performed 34 advanced interventions for SVT and WPW, including catheter ablations and life-saving pacemaker implantations.

One of the most powerful stories from this mission is Abu Ahmad's.

For 13 years, 36-year-old Abu Ahmad lived with sudden, life-threatening tachycardia episodes requiring repeated emergency intervention. The cause was a hidden electrical pathway in his heart, triggering dangerous arrhythmias. Its left-sided location made treatment especially complex and high-risk.

During this mission, SAMS' electrophysiology team performed a carefully guided catheter ablation using advanced techniques, successfully eliminating the abnormal pathway without complications.



Today, the episodes no longer control his life, and a long-lost sense of peace has returned. A life restored, and a heart finally back in rhythm.

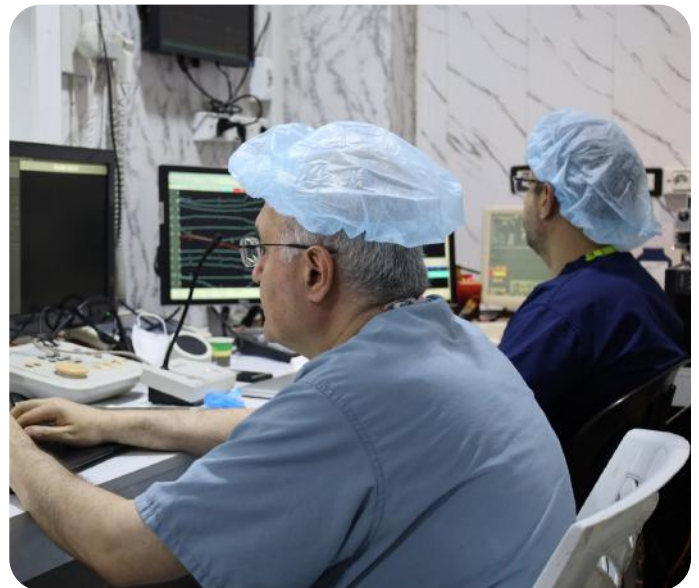
A key highlight of the mission was cross-border collaboration between Syrian physicians in-country and from the diaspora. At the SAMS Heart Hospital, Dr. Mohannad Sharabi performed a minimally invasive atrial septal defect (ASD) closure under the supervision of Dr. Hazaim Alwair, who joined from the United States. Dr. Bakri Kaakeh also worked closely with local teams across multiple advanced procedures, strengthening knowledge transfer and clinical integration.

In Homs, at Al-Birr Hospital, the team treated a patient with severe mitral valve stenosis. Led by Dr. Alwair and Dr. Yaser Wafai, the operation included valve replacement and tricuspid repair, restoring stable cardiac function.

In parallel, vascular surgeon Dr. Mohammad Sarhan delivered five days of intensive care across Idlib University Hospital and the SAMS Heart Hospital, including 18 consultations and procedures such as carotid endarterectomy, vascular angioplasty, bypass surgeries, and complex arterial catheterizations. He also led a lecture on Modern Management of Aortic Aneurysms.

Across all sites, the mission combined clinical excellence with training and knowledge exchange, delivering critical care while strengthening local capacity.

The April Medical Mission reflects SAMS' continued commitment to advancing specialized healthcare in Syria, transforming expertise into lifesaving impact where it is needed most.





## *SAMS Response in Lebanon: Delivering Lifesaving Care Amid Escalating Crisis*

Last month, Lebanon experienced a devastating escalation of violence, with widespread airstrikes impacting Beirut, the South, Mount Lebanon, and the Bekaa Valley. Within minutes, entire neighborhoods were struck, leaving hundreds killed, more than a thousand injured, and nearly one million people displaced since the escalation began in March. Families were forced to flee their homes in fear and uncertainty, seeking safety and urgent assistance.

In response to this rapidly deteriorating situation, SAMS healthcare workers were on the ground delivering lifesaving medical care and humanitarian support to displaced communities across affected regions.

In Jbeil (Byblos), the SAMS Primary Health Center remained fully operational and ran at full capacity to meet the increased demand. SAMS Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) in both Jbeil and the Bekaa Valley actively reached displacement sites, providing

essential medical consultations, medications, and psychosocial support. To date, SAMS teams in Jbeil alone have treated at least 280 patients.



SAMS continued to operate across multiple service points in Lebanon, including:

- Primary Health Center in Jbeil (Byblos)
- Mobile Medical Unit (Jbeil)
- Mobile Medical Unit (Bekaa)
- Mobile Protection Outreach Team (Bekaa)
- Comprehensive Mental Health Static Center in Al Marj
- Advanced Safe Space for Women and Girls in Aرسال (near the Syrian border)

Through these integrated services, SAMS addressed urgent physical health needs while also providing critical mental health and protection support, particularly for women and children affected by displacement and trauma.

As the crisis unfolded, SAMS Lebanon remained steadfast in its humanitarian response, ensuring access to essential care for some of the most vulnerable populations. These efforts reflect an ongoing commitment to stand with communities in moments of profound hardship.

Support is urgently needed to sustain these services and expand the reach of emergency care. Every contribution helps deliver medical aid, support mobile clinics, and provide relief to families who have lost everything.



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## SAMS X Asfari Foundation: Launching the Adeeb Asfari Maternity and Children’s Hospital

As part of SAMS commitment to the Loyalty to Idlib Campaign, the foundation stone was laid for the Adeeb Asfari Maternity and Children’s Hospital, west of Idlib city. The ceremony took place under the auspices of Idlib Governor Mohammad Abdulrahman and Syrian businessman



Ayman Asfari, and in the presence of Dr. Samer Arabi, Director of the Idlib Health Directorate, and Dr. Aref Rifai, President of the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS).

The project is generously supported by the Asfari Foundation and implemented in partnership with SAMS, under the auspices of the Syrian Ministry of Health. The ceremony was also attended by the Minister of Emergency and Disaster Management, Raed Al-Saleh.



This hospital marks an important step toward strengthening maternal and child healthcare services and addressing the region’s growing medical needs, particularly in specialized care for mothers and children, which remains among the most urgent priorities at this time.

Beyond service delivery, the hospital will serve as a hub for medical education and training, helping prepare a new generation of qualified healthcare professionals to lead Syria’s health recovery and reconstruction.

Today’s foundation laying is more than the start of a construction project, it signals a renewed commitment to collaboration, hope, and investment in Syria’s future: better health, and a stronger Syria for all.

# A Medical Milestone for Heart Patients in Syria

In a place where access to advanced cardiac care has long been limited, an extraordinary milestone has just been reached.

For the first time in Syria, the SAMS Heart Hospital in Idlib successfully performed two MitraClip procedures to treat severe mitral valve regurgitation using a transcatheter approach, one of the most complex cardiac interventions in the region.

For patients with advanced heart failure, this is not just an innovation. It is life-changing.



One patient arrived in critical condition despite months of optimized medical therapy and specialist follow-up in the United States. His case was reviewed by a multidisciplinary Heart Team across borders, which determined MitraClip repair was his only viable option.

SAMS teams in the U.S. and Syria worked together for weeks ahead of the April mission to make the procedure possible. It was successfully

completed using a single MitraClip, with immediate improvement in heart function and discharge within 24 hours.



As Dr. Hassan Al-Khawam said, “This was the patient’s only viable option.” Dr. Ibrahim Kassas added, “Success came from deep collaboration and preparation.” Dr. Tarek Kabbany shared, “We felt a profound responsibility. The patient is now stable.”

This is more than a medical achievement, it is hope made real in one of the most challenging settings in the world.

This milestone would not have been possible without you. Your support brings life-saving innovation to patients who have nowhere else to turn, and helps SAMS to continue reaching medical milestones that once seemed out of reach.



# SAMS Dallas Cardiology Conference

Recently, the SAMS Texas Chapter hosted the first SAMS Dallas Cardiology Conference, marking a significant gathering of leading physicians, fellows, and supporters in a collaborative forum focused on advancing cardiovascular care and sharing clinical expertise.

The program featured contributions from a distinguished group of speakers, including Anas Alomar, Sameh Sayfo, Ahmad Asfari, Tarek Alsaied, Aref Obagi, Ayman Tahhan, Akram Kawsara, and Riem Hawi. Discussions focused on recent developments in cardiology and the exchange of practical clinical knowledge aimed at improving patient outcomes.

The conference also highlighted the participation of SAMS cardiology fellows presenting remotely from Syria. Abdelkader Razzouk and Maher Keda contributed to the program, reflecting ongoing medical education efforts and continued clinical engagement despite challenging circumstances. Organizers acknowledged the support of conference sponsors and the active participation of attendees, noting that their involvement played an important role in the success of the event and the depth of discussion throughout the sessions.

Proceeds from the conference will be directed toward SAMS cardiology programs, supporting the expansion of cardiac services and improving access to care for patients in need.



# Strengthening Critical Care Capacity in Homs & Hama

**A**s part of its continued commitment to strengthening healthcare services in Syria, SAMS, in collaboration with the Directorates of Health in Homs and Hama, has delivered a significant shipment of essential medical equipment and electric hospital beds to intensive care units (ICUs) across multiple public hospitals.



This initiative addresses longstanding gaps in critical care capacity and aims to enhance the quality and continuity of lifesaving services in some of the most heavily burdened health facilities. By upgrading ICU infrastructure and providing essential equipment, SAMS is helping medical teams manage complex, high-acuity cases requiring continuous monitoring and advanced supportive care.

In Homs, the support reached key hospitals serving large and diverse populations, including Talkalakh Hospital, Ibn Al-Walid Hospital, the National Hospital, the University Hospital, and Sadat

National Hospital. These facilities play a central role in delivering emergency and inpatient services, and the newly provided ICU equipment strengthens their ability to respond to critical cases with greater efficiency and safety.

In Hama, ICU departments at Hama National Hospital, the Maternity and Children's Hospital, Al-Suqaylabiyah Hospital, and Al-Salamiyah Hospital were similarly equipped. The inclusion of maternity and pediatric services highlights the importance of strengthening critical care for newborns, children, and mothers, who often require specialized intensive interventions.

Electric hospital beds and supporting equipment are more than logistical upgrades—they directly improve patient outcomes. They enhance patient mobility in critical condition, reduce complications, ease the workload on healthcare staff, and enable safer, more effective care delivery in high-pressure environments.

This effort is part of SAMS' broader long-term strategy to strengthen the resilience of Syria's healthcare system, particularly in central regions where ICU demand remains consistently high. In close coordination with local health authorities, SAMS continues to prioritize sustainable improvements that enhance hospital capacity and ensure medical teams are equipped to deliver high-quality, lifesaving care.



# *Bridging Dialogue and Reform: SAMS Engages Syrian Officials on Health Recovery Priorities*

Last month, SAMS Foundation Chair, Dr. Abdulfatah Elshaar, alongside the SAMS Headquarters Advocacy team, took part in a high-level community discussion in Washington, D.C. with the Syrian Minister of Finance, the Governor of the Central Bank, the Head of the International Cooperation Department, the Syrian Ambassador to the United Nations, and the newly appointed Syrian Attaché to the United States. The session was organized by Syrian American diaspora organizations.

The discussion addressed a broad range of pressing national issues, including the priorities of the newly appointed Attaché, current socio-economic conditions in Syria, public sector salaries, institutional capacity building, efforts to stabilize the Syrian pound, inflation, and opportunities for investment.

SAMS highlighted key priorities within the health sector, particularly the condition of public hospitals and healthcare facilities, the urgent need to improve quality of care, and the growing role of health insurance in strengthening access to essential services. In response, the Minister of Finance

outlined government plans to enhance service standards and expand insurance coverage, while clarifying that efforts to encourage investment are not intended to lead to the privatization of public hospitals.



SAMS also raised important questions regarding the National Recovery Plan, emphasizing the need for stronger coordination between NGOs and relevant ministries, as well as the development of a clear implementation framework to ensure effective and accountable execution of the strategy.





## 10 Years of SAMS Hellas: A Decade of Care, Commitment, and Community

Ten years on, SAMS Hellas stands as a testament to what sustained humanitarian medical care can achieve. In 2025, the program marked a decade of service in Greece, working alongside displaced communities and reinforcing a commitment to equitable healthcare for all, without exception.



Since its launch in 2016, SAMS Hellas has responded to the growing humanitarian needs of refugees and asylum seekers across Greece. What began as an urgent response to crisis has evolved into a sustained medical effort delivering both immediate and long-term care in refugee camps, hotels, and underserved urban settings.

Over the years, SAMS Hellas has remained present where it is needed most—through mobile medical clinics in Attica, vaccination campaigns, and essential referral services that connect patients to

continued care. Today, with more than 120,000 asylum seekers still in Greece, including thousands of unaccompanied children, these services remain a critical lifeline for individuals navigating displacement, uncertainty, and recovery.

This milestone reflects not only a decade of service, but also the dedication of the SAMS Hellas team and partners who have continued to show up, day after day, to deliver care under challenging circumstances. Their work has helped ensure that access to healthcare remains a reality for some of the most vulnerable populations in the region.



As SAMS Hellas enters its next chapter, the commitment remains unchanged: to stand with communities in need and continue strengthening pathways to dignity, health, and hope.

# *Sustaining Care in Gaza: Advancing Women's Health and Essential Services*

**I**n Gaza, SAMS medical teams continue to respond to urgent and evolving health needs, with a strong focus on placing women at the center of care. Through comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, SAMS works to support the well-being of mothers and children while contributing to a more informed and health-conscious society.

These services include specialized consultations on contraceptive options, practical guidance for family health and safety, and educational sessions designed to strengthen both health awareness and social understanding. Through this integrated approach, women are empowered with the knowledge and resources needed to protect their health, support their families, and contribute to a safer, healthier future.

Alongside SRH services, SAMS continues to support essential dental care in Gaza through the Palestinian Medical Center (PMC), operated by the Health Care and Development Association (HCDA). The two dental clinics provide both preventive and therapeutic services to vulnerable populations, reinforcing continued efforts to address critical health needs amid the ongoing crisis.

Together, these initiatives reflect SAMS' broader commitment to restoring dignity and strengthening access to essential care in Gaza. From primary health services to specialized treatment, each intervention plays a role in supporting resilience and recovery.



# Restoring Sound, Rebuilding Connection: Cochlear Implant Activation in Jordan

Hearing is a vital function that extends far beyond the perception of sound. It is closely linked to language development, communication, learning, and overall quality of life.



In this context, SAMS is pleased to announce the initiation of the activation phase for cochlear implant recipients in Jordan. This stage follows the successful completion of cochlear implant surgeries carried out one month ago in collaboration with My Right to Hear.

During this phase, the cochlear implant processors were individually programmed and finely tuned for each child, based on their specific auditory

responses. This careful adjustment marks a key milestone in the post-implant rehabilitation journey. More than a technical procedure, this activation represents a functional transition toward the restoration of hearing. It directly supports speech development, social interaction, and sensory awareness. The sounds the children begin to perceive today, from environmental noises to human speech, signal the start of a gradual and meaningful reconstruction of their auditory world.



SAMS extends its sincere gratitude to all medical and technical teams, as well as to its partners, whose collaboration made this integrated program possible.

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# Strengthening Hospital Emergency Response in Ukraine

SAMS Ukraine successfully organized the final session in a comprehensive series of supervised Mass Casualty Management (MCM) trainings for hospitals, alongside the launch of the first in a new series of locally led, hospital-based MCM simulation exercises in Dnipro, held from April 20–22.

This initiative represents a significant milestone in strengthening emergency preparedness and improving the capacity of healthcare facilities to respond effectively during large-scale crises. The training series was designed to move beyond theoretical instruction by combining structured classroom learning with hands-on, realistic hospital-based simulations. This approach allowed healthcare teams to practice coordinated responses in scenarios that closely mirror real-life mass casualty events.

Throughout the sessions, participants developed critical skills in triage, patient flow management, rapid decision-making, and interdepartmental coordination. The exercises also emphasized communication under pressure and efficient resource allocation, both essential components in managing complex emergencies where time and accuracy are vital.

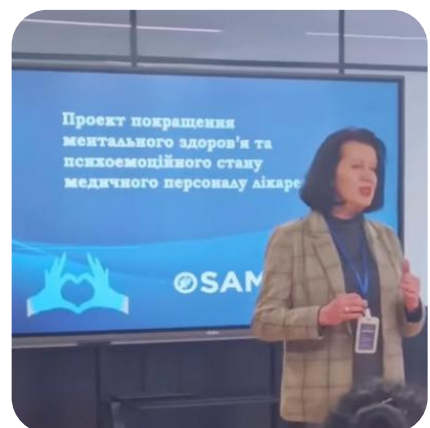


By the conclusion of the training series, participating hospital teams demonstrated improved readiness, stronger teamwork, and enhanced confidence in their ability to respond to high-pressure situations. The locally led nature of the new simulation exercises further reinforced ownership and sustainability, ensuring that these practices can be adapted and integrated into routine hospital preparedness protocols.

Through initiatives like this, SAMS continues to stand alongside frontline healthcare professionals, investing in practical capacity-building efforts that strengthen emergency response systems. These efforts ultimately contribute to more resilient, responsive, and better-prepared health systems in communities facing ongoing and future humanitarian challenges.



[Watch the video](#)



## Dr. Chighaf Bakour

From Damascus, Syria, to shaping the next generation of public health professionals in the United States, Dr. Chighaf Bakour exemplifies dedication, scholarship, and a deep commitment to improving health outcomes.

Dr. Bakour earned her medical degree from Damascus University in 1994 and later completed her PhD at the University of South Florida in 2016, building a strong foundation for her career in epidemiology. She completed part of her residency in Ophthalmology in Damascus before transitioning to public health research and education.

Today, Dr. Bakour serves as Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the College of Public Health, University of South Florida, where she teaches and mentors graduate students, leads the epidemiology concentration in the MPH and MSPH programs, chairs the college's education committee, and conducts research focused on sleep, mental health, trauma, and behavioral risk factors for disease.

Family remains central to Dr. Bakour's life. She is married to Dr. Mohammad Ayman Joud, and together they have two sons. Outside of work, she enjoys reading, walking in nature, and traveling, activities that offer balance and inspiration.

Dr. Bakour has been an active SAMS member since 2017, contributing her expertise to several initiatives. She served on the Global Response Committee (2017–2019), developed and delivered lectures for the Evidence-Based Medicine course (2019), and later led lectures and mentorship in the Introduction to Public Health course (2025). She currently serves on the Research Committee, helping to advance evidence-based approaches and strengthen SAMS' academic and research missions.

When asked what SAMS means to her, Dr. Bakour shares:

“SAMS brings Syrian healthcare professionals and their families together, with the common goal of helping Syrians inside and outside Syria.”

Reflecting on what inspired her to become a member, she adds:

“The desire to contribute to SAMS' work in helping Syrians everywhere, and to connect with fellow Syrian healthcare professionals.”

Through her dedication to education, research, and humanitarian service, Dr. Chighaf Bakour continues to make a meaningful impact—shaping future public health leaders while supporting SAMS' mission to improve the lives of Syrians worldwide.





## *Shaping the Future of Medicine in Syria: A New Standard of Clinical Training in Aleppo*

SAMS Medical Education has inaugurated the Medical Simulation Training Center in the city of Aleppo, marking a significant achievement that reflects SAMS’ ongoing commitment to advancing medical education and strengthening the skills of healthcare professionals, directly improving the quality of care provided to patients.

The opening ceremony was attended by a distinguished group of medical and official figures, including Dr. Mohammad Wajeih Jumaa, Director of Aleppo Health Directorate; Dr. Osama Al-Zeer, President of the Syrian Nursing Syndicate; Dr. Ammar Niazi, Dean of the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Aleppo; Dr. Aref Al-Rifai, President of SAMS; and Dr. Mazen Kawara, the organization’s Regional Director—alongside broad participation from representatives of health institutions and media outlets.

The center is an advanced training environment that utilizes the latest medical simulation technologies, allowing doctors and nurses to acquire and refine clinical skills in a safe, interactive setting, without exposing patients to any risk.

The center offers specialized training programs, including:

- Basic and Advanced Life Support
- Emergency and trauma management
- Intensive care
- Surgical and clinical procedure skills
- Ultrasound imaging

It is also equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including high-fidelity simulation devices, fully integrated training rooms, and advanced audiovisual systems for performance evaluation and enhanced learning.

This center is more than just a training facility, it is an investment in people and in the future of Syria’s healthcare system. It is expected to train hundreds of healthcare professionals annually, enhance patient safety, and support the sustainability of the health sector.



## *SAMS Medical Missions – Extending Impact Beyond the 24th International Conference in Aleppo*

As part of the 24th SAMS International Conference in Aleppo, Syria, SAMS is proud to announce a series of impactful Medical Missions taking place alongside this landmark scientific gathering. These missions serve as a vital extension of the conference's purpose—transforming knowledge into action and directly strengthening healthcare delivery for patients and facilities on the ground.

### **Pre-Conference Medical Mission**

*June 21–25, 2026*

A focused period of hands-on clinical engagement, where medical teams will work directly within local healthcare facilities to provide specialized care and support capacity building.

### **SAMS 24th International Conference**

*June 27–29, 2026*

University of Aleppo, Syria

A premier scientific gathering bringing together healthcare professionals, researchers, and experts to exchange knowledge, advance medical practice, and foster collaboration across disciplines.

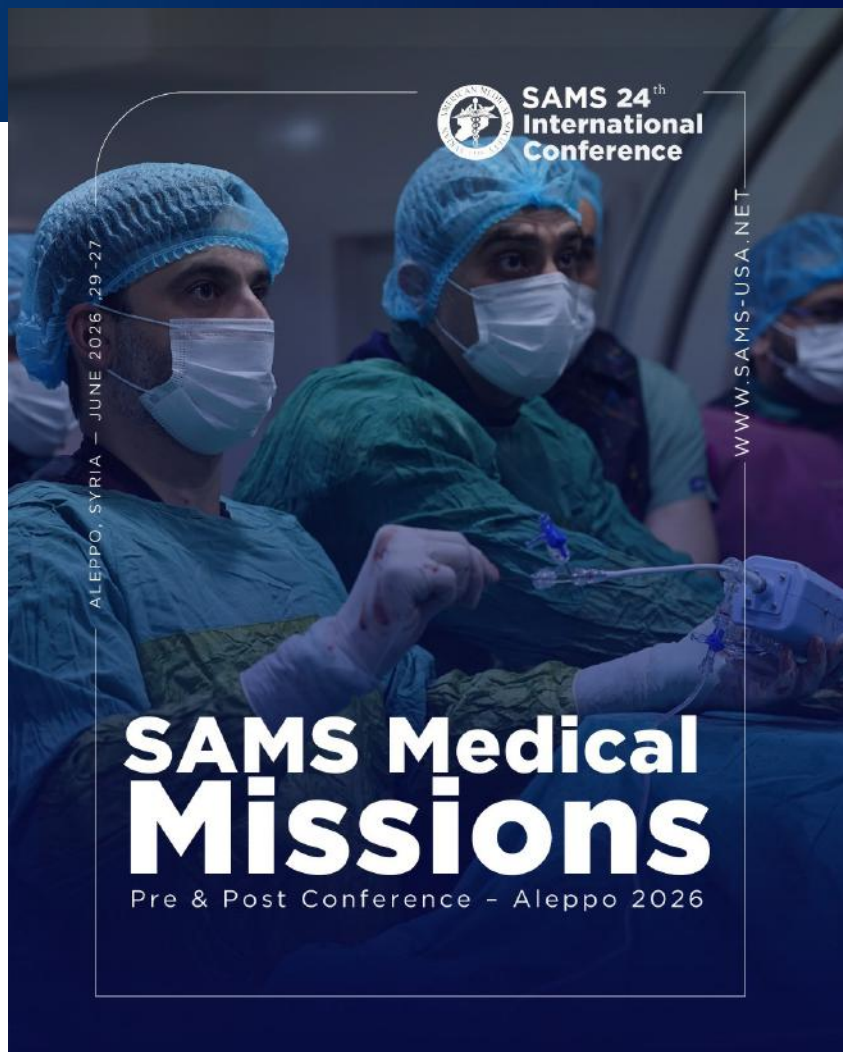
### **Post-Conference Medical Mission**

*June 30 – July 2, 2026*

Continuing the momentum of the conference, participating teams will return to the field to deliver direct patient care and reinforce clinical impact in targeted medical specialties.

We warmly invite healthcare professionals, researchers, and experts from around the world to join us in Aleppo for these days of collaboration, learning, and meaningful humanitarian impact, where science meets service and knowledge becomes healing.

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# SAVE THE DATE

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JUNE 27 - 29, 2026

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## MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Reflecting on this month's stories, from healing in Syria to hope in Gaza, it's clear that our united efforts are making a greater difference than ever.

But the work is far from over.

Whether you're a healthcare professional, advocate, or supporter, you have a role to play in advancing our mission of delivering dignified, high-quality care to communities in crisis.

### Here's how you can stay engaged:



Donate to support emergency relief and medical care:  
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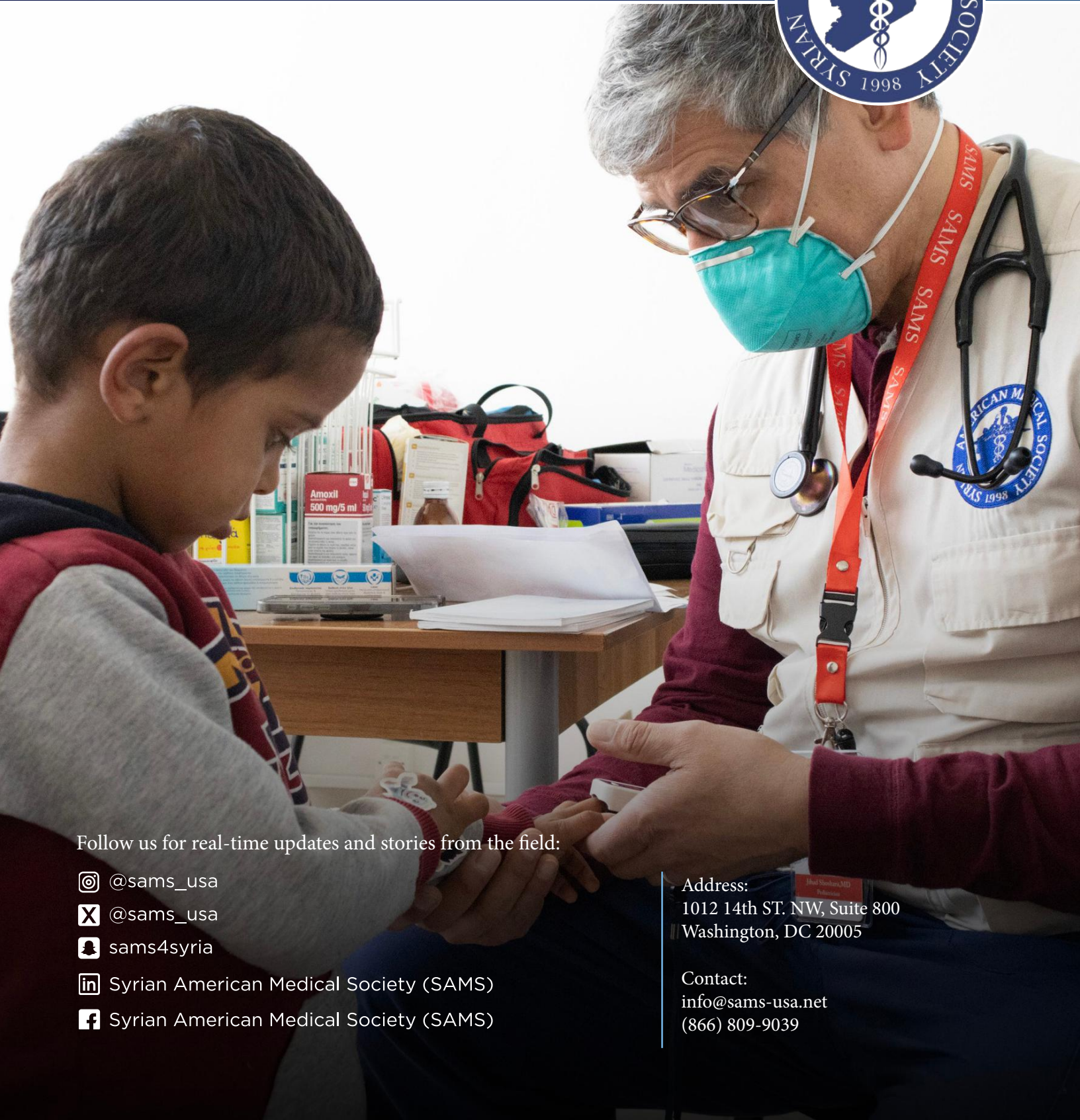
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Advocate by amplifying our message and engaging with policymakers


*Thank you for being part of the SAMS family.  
Together, we are healing, rebuilding, and  
inspiring hope.*


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