

AIHA Partners at Elmhurst Hospital Center Receive President's Volunteer Service Award for Work in Russia

Members of AIHA's USAID-funded Orenburg/New York City partnership received the President's Volunteer Service Award in recognition of their exemplary service and dedication to improving the quality and scope of HIV/AIDS-related treatment, care, and support in the Russian Federation.

USAID Assistant Administrator Douglas Menarchik presented 27 individual awards, as well as an institutional award for Elmhurst Hospital Center, during a ceremony held in conjunction with the hospital's 50th anniversary celebration on March 15 in New York City.



AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith was also on hand to award certificates of appreciation to more than 20 other healthcare professionals who have contributed significantly to the success of the partnership.

Partners from Elmhurst Hospital Center gather with USAID Assistant Administrator Douglas Menarchik (center) and AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith (front left) following the presentation of the awards.

Established in July 2004, the Orenburg/New York

City partnership is one of four AIHA twinning alliances supported by USAID's HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care, and Support Initiative in Russia.

The partnership links the Orenburg Oblast AIDS Center with Elmhurst Hospital Center and other nearby organizations involved in the provision of HIV/AIDS care, including Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, the New York City Department of Health's HIV Surveillance Unit and AIDS Institute, and the AIDS Center of Queens County.

According to Menarchik, the Orenburg/New York City partnership and other similar health programs play an important role in USAID's assistance strategy for Europe and Eurasia, particularly in Russia where better health is critical to the nation's economic, political, and social security.

“Russia has one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world and USAID is proud of the work that has been done together with Elmhurst and its affiliates to improve the lives of so many in [that country],” he said. “Foreign assistance through this kind of specialized technical assistance and sharing can be a strong formula for peace and stability around the world.”

Calling the partnership an “outstanding example of the long history of collaborative health efforts with Russia that is highlighted in this year’s celebration of the 200th anniversary of US-Russia relations,” Menarchik presented gold awards – given in recognition of 500 or more volunteer hours– to Judith Brenner, Joseph Masci, Jacqueline Stith, and Elmhurst Hospital Center. Vasanthi Arumagum, Neil Landreville, and Marilyn Fabbri received silver awards, which are given to people who volunteer between 250-499 hours. Bronze awards recognizing those who have volunteered between 175-249 hours were given to Alexa Contraras, Judith Casey, Carol Cardenas-Tinoco, Alan Blalock, Amar Ashraf, George Alonso, Juan Carolos Tobon, Maurice Policar, Andrea Odwin-Clarke, Susan Novales, Arline McDonald, Ranjana Kutwal-Sharma, Sylvia Jaegar, Kathleen Higgins, Karina Gritsenko, Zoraya Gil, Pamela Gibbons, Judith Garcia, Elizabeth Franquie, Phillip Rabito, and Carlos Salama.

“Developing strong relationships with Russia through this type of activity is in our own national interest,” Menarchik told the group. “Through health partnerships, [colleagues] from the United States and from the region work together as peers to identify health needs, develop realistic strategies for meeting those needs, and implement programs to attain their goals,” he said, noting such an approach instills a strong sense of ownership and establishes relationships that endure long after USAID funding ends.

The Orenburg/Elmhurst partners have worked together to develop an integrated model of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment, and social support that can be replicated throughout Russia. Some of their key accomplishments include developing a needs assessment tool to organize HIV care and adapting a case management system and new patient intake protocols from effective models they saw at work in the United States.

Published in the Winter 2007 edition of “Connections,” a quarterly newsletter highlighting the American International Health Alliance’s development programs in the EECA Region.