

NRTC Sets Regional Standards for Training, Continuing Education

Situated 1,000 miles east of Moscow in Russia's Ural Mountains, Chelyabinsk was closed to foreigners until the early 1990s. The region has long been home to huge metallurgical, tractor, tank, and weapons facilities, which has left it heavily polluted by industrial waste, including radioactive byproducts of nuclear weapons manufacturing. This legacy resulted in significant health risks to the local population, particularly for women in their child-bearing years along with infants and children.

With USAID support, AIHA launched the Chelyabinsk/Tacoma partnership in 1998. The partnership linked Multicare Medical Center and other Tacoma, Washington-area healthcare institutions with the Chelyabinsk regional and city administrations and area hospitals with the objective of improving neonatal health.

Part of AIHA's Neonatal Resuscitation Initiative, this twinning alliance focused on training local obstetricians, pediatricians, and other professionals involved with maternal health. Partners also collected data on neonatal health problems and mortality to better inform public health policymaking and clinical practice and worked to improve urgent care, stabilization, and transport capabilities for sick newborns.

Between 1998 and 1999, partners laid a strong foundation for long-term, sustainable improvements in neonatal care through ongoing practitioner training and education. In 2004, the Neonatal Resuscitation Training Center (NRTC) in Chelyabinsk received formal approval from the Ural State Medical Academy of Continuous Education to provide a distance learning course based on AIHA's Neonatal Resuscitation Training Program (AAP/AHA). That same year, the Russian Ministry of Health sanctioned the course, issuing Decree No. 372 on emergency neonatal care in the maternity ward. The Chelyabinsk City Healthcare Department issued *prikaz* 84/1 in June 2004, making it mandatory for all neonatologists and neonatal nurses from municipal hospitals to participate in NRTC NRP recertification training.



According to a series of National Public Radio reports in December 2008, the number of births in Chelyabinsk jumped from 1,200 in 2007 to 2,000 in 2008, greatly straining local hospitals.