

AIHA Showcases Its Accomplishments at Eurasia Region AIDS Conference

"Facing the challenge" was an appropriate title for the first Eastern European and Central Asian AIDS Conference held in Moscow May 15-17, 2006. The conference became a powerful engine for bringing the world's attention to the region's growing HIV epidemic and to the needs of the estimated 1.6 million people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Eurasia.

More than 1,600 representatives of government, research, medical, and religious institutions and the mass media gathered with members of international and public organizations from 55 countries spanning the globe to share their knowledge, experience, and commitment to fighting the HIV epidemic during the three-day event.



AIHA staff and partners were among those who presented successful programs and methodologies at the conference. Speaking at the breakout session "Women and Children's Health," Natalia Nizova, director of AIHA's project on prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV in Ukraine, briefed the audience on how the improved medical and social services implemented in several Ukrainian oblasts through the project have helped optimize care and support services available to HIV-infected women and their children. Stela Bivol, senior program coordinator at AIHA's Russia Regional Office in Moscow, described an automated regional system of monitoring mother-to-child transmission that was developed by AIHA as part of USAID project focused on tracking HIV-infected women and their children. Since autumn 2003, this system has been undergoing testing in Togliatti, a city in Samara Oblast with one of the highest HIV infection rates in Russia, and is now being replicated in Orenburg and Saratov oblasts and the city of St. Petersburg.

Conference participants, including AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith and Eurasia Regional HIV/AIDS Coordinator Zoya Shabarova (third row, far right), listen to the welcoming remarks from Russia Federation Minister of Health and Social Development Mikhail Zurabov. (Photo: Vira Illiash)

Another tool for improving services and care for PLWHA was presented by Arsen Kubataev, regional director of AIHA's office in Moscow. He described an innovative practice of HIV treatment and care quality assurance called "chart audit" widely used in the United States to assess changes in clinical practice. According to Kubataev, such a practice was implemented in Russia first by the Saratov/Bemidji partnership and then in St. Petersburg, Orenburg, and

Togliatti. Within a year patient chart audit helped improve the quality of HIV/AIDS treatment and care in the city of Engels in Saratov Oblast.



At the AIHA information booth, Irina Shumilova, ICT and monitoring and evaluation coordinator at AIHA's Russia Regional Office in Moscow, demonstrates the automated database for monitoring mother-to-child transmission that was developed by AIHA. (Photo: Vira Illiash)

Sergey Mikhailov, deputy head of the Orenburg AIDS Center, reported the results of a survey on HIV transmission awareness among Russian healthcare workers conducted by the Orenburg/Elmhurst partners. This assessment tool helped reveal common gaps in the knowledge of medical workers about HIV transmission routes and identify the specialized training needed to close these gaps.

Regional HIV/AIDS Coordinator. Shabarova underscored that the Knowledge Hub provides training courses not only for Ukrainian specialists but also for healthcare professionals from Russia and other countries of throughout the region.

A presentation on the Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia established by AIHA in Ukraine to build human capacity and ensure the country's ability to offer comprehensive care and treatment to patients with HIV/AIDS, was delivered by Zoya Shabarova, Eurasia

Conference attendees also had a chance to visit an exhibition at which a wide range of AIHA's educational materials and highlights about its programs and activities related to HIV/AIDS were displayed and disseminated.