



Partnering to Build HIV/AIDS Capacity in Russia: Volga River AIDS Alliance

AIHA and AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) are implementing the Volga River AIDS Alliance, a public-private partnership designed to scale up primary level care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS in Russia's Samara and Saratov oblasts.

Launched in December 2006, the Volga River AIDS Alliance is supported by USAID through its Global Development Alliance Initiative. The project builds on the many accomplishments of AIHA's USAID-funded Saratov/Bemidji (Minnesota) and Togliatti/Providence (Rhode Island) partnerships, which were established in 2004 to create model HIV/AIDS care, treatment, and support programs that could be replicated throughout Russia.

As the implementing partner, AIHA leads the training and monitoring and evaluation components, while AHF provides expertise in clinic operations and management, as well as professional mentors and faculty. The Volga River AIDS Alliance's capacity building strategy focuses on clinical training and mentoring for primary level infectious disease specialists, HIV/AIDS care teams, and general practitioners.

Clinicians undergo rigorous, comprehensive training that prepares them to accurately assess the condition of HIV-infected patients, initiate and manage antiretroviral therapy, and diagnose and manage opportunistic infections that commonly afflict people living with HIV or AIDS. The project provides additional training on topics such as case management, establishing an effective referral system, and palliative care.

The Volga River AIDS Alliance project also conducts "HIV 101" courses designed to give community-based and primary care practitioners an accurate overview of the disease and the epidemic in their region, and to strengthen their patient communication and counseling skills. These courses help combat stigma and discrimination while at the same time arming a larger healthcare workforce with the knowledge and skills they need to assist Russia's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS.

With an eye toward the future, AIHA and AHF are working with regional health authorities to build institutional training capacity within the Volga region to support ongoing capacity building efforts beyond the funding period of the Volga River AIDS Alliance project.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

Launch Date

- December 2006

Target Regions

- Togliatti (Samara Oblast)
- Balakovo, Engels, Komsomolsk, Volsk (Saratov Oblast)

Key Objectives

- Strengthen HIV/AIDS services at the primary care level
- Support regional goals of initiating ART for 1,500 people by December 2008

Key Accomplishments to Date

- 40 infectious disease specialists trained
- 30 primary care physicians trained
- 20 nurses trained
- 400 patients referred to ART services by primary care clinics and municipal polyclinics whose staff received training through the project

