

NIS Women Managers Video Debuts in Iowa

Women physicians and nurses have been active participants in NIS hospital partnerships over the past four years, and, although they have learned much from sharing clinical ideas with their colleagues, many say the partnerships' most significant achievement has been to raise the profile of women health care managers.

When eight women managers from across the NIS met in Moscow last September, cameras greeted them to record some of their thoughts for a video that debuted at the Annual NIS Partnership Conference in Des Moines, Iowa. The video, titled *Women Leaders: Changing Healthcare in the NIS*, encapsulates the triumphs and challenges these women have faced on the job since the collapse of the Soviet Union forced major reforms in health care delivery.

"In the Soviet system, managers really didn't command much respect. So by developing courses that helped managers to see the roles and behaviors that effective managers use, we helped them realize the power and the ability they have to transform the system," says Susan Taylor, an Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA) faculty member who helped develop partnership management training workshops.

"From the beginning, we were conscious of the need to elevate women's roles in management... We created an environment where everyone had an equal voice and where people worked together in teams on a daily basis."

In the NIS, where 80 percent of health care workers are women but only 10 percent of these women are managers, the partnership program has taught women valuable new skills emphasizing teamwork and problem solving. Nurses, in particular, have gained new respect as managers, the video points out.

"When a supervisor is a nurse, it is wonderful. We've educated her and prepared her for the job," says Rimma Grigorieva, MD, vice president of Sokolov Medical Center in St. Petersburg, Russia. "It works out much more efficiently than when the physician is the department head. She communicates with everybody--with patients, with other nurses and physicians, with lab technicians."

Several women in the video credit the partnerships with giving them a new, more positive outlook on their jobs.

Bakyt Tumenova, MD, head of the Social Services Department, Semipalatinsk Oblast Administration in Semipalatinsk, Kazakstan, remarks: "Many things have changed, especially the culture of management... Before, in our system of health care, we were used to getting orders from the central Ministry of Health, and we followed those orders. Now, not only do we give more freedom to people under us whom we manage, but we demand more freedom for ourselves, too."

"My participation in the [management] workshops helped me to systematize my knowledge," says Gavkhar Amirova, MD, chief, Medical Fee-for-Service Department at TASHMI II in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

"The analysis I learned in the workshops I even use at home now. Any time I need to make a decision, and of course at work as well, I always evaluate strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and I think through every possible solution. And this helps me a lot in decision making."

Viola Danelia, chief economist at City Hospital No. 2 in Tbilisi, Georgia, adds: "Now I can listen to other people and hear their opinions. Before, I never thought you should take others' opinions into consideration when trying to achieve a goal."

Overall, the partnership program has made great strides in building women's confidence through both clinical and management training, Elena Bourganskaia, MD, AIHA NIS project coordinator, concludes in the video.

"I think that this is particularly important for women because they see role models--they see their American colleagues, who assume very high positions in their institutions and manage departments, entire institutions and even health care systems."

For more information on *Women Leaders: Changing Healthcare in the NIS*, contact Elena Bourganskaia at (202) 789-1136 or by e-mail at elena@aiha.com.