

## NIS Women's Health Centers Promote Comprehensive Care

AIHA partners will open the first of 15 Women's Wellness Centers (WWC) this spring in Almaty, Kazakstan; Chisinau, Moldova; Tashkent, Uzbekistan; and Yerevan, Armenia. These centers share a common goal of providing comprehensive health care to women of all ages that includes clinical prevention services, screening and counseling. A key component of these centers is raising women's awareness of the important link between women's health and behavioral risk factors such as the use of tobacco, alcohol and poor nutrition, said Bernice Bennett, MPH, CHES, AIHA partner coordinator and director of the WWC project.

Women's health services are already being offered at the Erebuni Medical Center in Yerevan. Since the center opened its doors in 1992, it has offered a range of comprehensive gynecological and obstetrical services to a growing number of patients. It currently provides care to approximately 12,000 women per year and sees an estimated 2,500 new patients annually. Physicians at the center attribute this increase in patient volume to the way care is provided, said Salpy Akaragian, RN, MN, clinical education specialist, UCLA Medical Center and US partner coordinator for the Yerevan/University of California at Los Angeles partnership.

"The new clinic encourages maximum patient privacy and provides patient counseling and education services," Akaragian said.

The center will be enhanced by the June 29 opening of the patient education and Lamaze childbirth training programs. The Yerevan center also plans to incorporate nurse management training.

The Almaty, Chisinau and Tashkent centers will open following the completion of remodeling efforts and the receipt of donated medical equipment and supplies, including modern exam tables and educational audiovisual and resource materials. Plans are under way to introduce adolescent sex education classes, family planning counseling, health promotion and prevention concepts and care to women of all ages at these centers.

The Almaty center plans to introduce contraception counseling for teens. The Tashkent Center is working on developing an anemia education program to address the high incidence of anemia in Uzbekistan. And the Chisinau center will provide childbirth education and fatherhood classes as part of its prenatal education program.

Over the next few months, women's health educators from the NIS will travel to their US partners to review and adapt western approaches to women's health services. In February, the Chisinau-Minneapolis partnership hosted a five-member delegation at US partner institutions in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where educators observed a variety of women's health services, from a women and children's community clinic to a school-based clinic, to a sexual abuse resource center to a women's shelter.

"We want to create a full service health promotion center for women of all ages in which they can receive comprehensive primary care and counseling services to care for their own bodies, including yearly physical exams and pap smears," said Cheri Galbraith, US project coordinator for the Chisinau/Hennepin County Medical Center partnership.