

## AIHA and WHO Collaboration Spurs Health Advances

By Joanne Neuber

This fall, the World Health Organization (WHO) will mark 50 years of promoting health, from working to eradicate small pox and polio to preventing malnutrition. The hallmark of WHO's success stories has been its collaboration with health ministries, practitioners and non-governmental organizations around the world, including AIHA.

"WHO can do very little alone. It is always a partner with someone or with many," said Gro Harlem Brundtland, MD, in a speech to WHO's executive board when she was nominated in January as the next Director-General of WHO. "The success of WHO as the world's leading agency in health, as a partner of every country and of thousands of institutions, must ultimately be measured where health services and public health programs are rendered."

In the NIS and CEE, AIHA is working with WHO in an array of areas, from nursing to diabetes management. According to Ainna Fawcett-Henesy, acting regional advisor for nursing and midwifery with WHO/Europe, "the AIHA partnership project has done much to complement the work of WHO by providing educational opportunities such as organizing workshops, seminars and annual conferences, and by creating twinning/partnership arrangements with colleagues in the United States so that health care professionals can encounter good role models."

Raising the profile of nursing and increasing educational opportunities are joint goals of AIHA and WHO's nursing programs. AIHA's Nursing Resource Centers across the NIS and CEE serve as "important channels for dissemination" of WHO publications, such as the quarterly WHO nursing and midwifery newsletter *Health Care in Transition* and job description policies and guidelines, Fawcett-Henesy said.

In turn, the WHO Nursing in Transition program has supported AIHA nursing initiatives by helping nurses identify innovative nursing practices, lobbying ministries of health to improve the status of nursing, and developing nursing standards and quality indicators for use across the NIS and CEE.

AIHA and WHO have teamed up to offer collaborative training workshops for microbiology staff in the NIS to help curb rising drug resistance rates and update skills. A series of AIHA/WHO workshops began last summer to train microbiologists, clinicians and infection control workers to use WHONET, a computer program that enables epidemiologists to store data on infectious diseases and to measure the effectiveness of antibiotics in treating these diseases.

As a result, microbiology staff at AIHA partner institutions and in national laboratories in Russia and Ukraine are the first in the NIS to use the WHONET software to enhance monitoring of drug resistance in their hospitals and communities, and to merge their files into national, regional and global networks for surveillance of drug resistance.

This collaborative work "can stimulate activities and partnerships not only with the US, but also with neighboring European countries," said Rosamund Williams, MD, Division of Emerging and Other Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Control, WHO.

AIHA and WHO have also collaborated in the area of diabetes. Two diabetes workshops co-sponsored by AIHA and WHO convened in Moscow last fall and winter to train clinicians from the six AIHA Moscow Region Diabetes Schools on the use of the WHO DIABCARE quality management system. The system enables specialists to carry out data analysis at each site and benchmark outcomes. The data will also be compared with patient information from other schools of diabetes in Russia and CEE that collaborate with WHO/Europe. A third AIHA/WHO workshop is scheduled for spring 1998.

The areas of information technology, health education and community health also offer opportunities for AIHA and WHO to share successful strategies and collaborate on projects.

AIHA and WHO share an interest in electronic libraries, promotion of technology literacy among health professionals and enhancement of access to Internet and CD-based sources of health information. Through the creation of AIHA's 94 partnership Learning Resource Centers (LRCs), partnership institutions established a sustainable link to the growing network of medical information available via computer. Internet access also allows partners to learn more about WHO programs and gain access to databases of health information.

AIHA and its Learning Resource Centers are participating members of the European Health Communications Network, an initiative begun by WHO last summer to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences, training opportunities, written and video material and examples of good practice. The network has focused particularly on healthy lifestyles and environmental issues.

AIHA and WHO also have shared their perspectives on the future of current health care workforce reform efforts in CEE/NIS. Following AIHA's International Conference on the Healthcare Workforce for the 21st Century, held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in April 1997, WHO invited AIHA to discuss conference findings during a meeting of its Central Asian Republics network, or CARNET. In turn, several WHO regional advisers addressed AIHA's March conference on "Shaping the Infrastructure of Health Professions" in Budapest.

AIHA and WHO also share findings from their community-based health programs. Building on the successful WHO Healthy Cities model, AIHA partners in Slovakia developed a healthy communities initiative that aims to promote healthier lifestyles by reaching beyond hospital walls and into the community.

Collectively, these initiatives support a common goal for AIHA and WHO: promoting healthier lives around the globe. As WHO builds on its achievements of the past half century, AIHA will continue to collaborate on a number of fronts, from infection control to health professions education.