

AIHA Directions

Health Professions Conference Convenes in Budapest

The changing face of the global health care workforce was the topic of a two-day conference in Budapest, Hungary, co-sponsored by AIHA and the Association of Academic Health Centers (AHC) in Washington, DC. Approximately 100 US and CEE medical school faculty and administrators, health policymakers and government officials convened the March 30-31 conference, titled "Shaping the Infrastructure of Health Professions: A Dialogue Between the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the United States."

Conference participants addressed reform of health care delivery systems, workforce planning, practitioners' changing roles, application of management skills in health care and effective utilization of information technology.

"Reconfiguring the health care workforce is a critical component of health care reform across the world," said AIHA associate director for programs Ed Martinez. "As the CEE and NIS nations embrace democratization and new market economies and seek to improve the quality and productivity of health care delivery, workforce issues will be of paramount importance to any successful reform effort."

Hungarian Minister of Health Mihaly Kokeny, MD; Peter Tufo, US Ambassador to Hungary; Kenneth Kizer, MD, Undersecretary for Health, US Department of Veterans Affairs; and Osman Sinanovic, Minister of Health for Bosnia's Tuzla Canton, attended the conference. AIHA and AHC co-sponsored a similar conference on NIS health care workforce issues last year in Tashkent, Uzbekistan ([see Summer 1997 CommonHealth](#)).

US First Lady Discusses Her Trip to the NIS

In a February 17 speech at the US State Department, US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton briefed about 400 representatives of government, non-governmental organizations and the media about her November 1997 visit to the NIS. During the trip, she helped inaugurate AIHA Women's Wellness Centers in Almaty, Kazakstan and Tashkent, Uzbekistan. She also visited the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Neonatal Resuscitation Training Center at L'viv Clinical Oblast Hospital in Ukraine.

"The wellness centers mean better health not only for the women they serve, but for their children and the community," she said.

Clinton discussed each of her visits to partnership institutions during a slide show about her trip. She noted that because of family planning services made available through the Almaty-Tucson, Arizona partnership, the abortion rate has fallen 25 percent; the infant mortality rate at L'viv Clinical Oblast Hospital has fallen by more than 30 percent; and health professionals in Uzbekistan are utilizing the pharmaceuticals and other supplies sent via the Operation Provide Hope airlift last June.

"In my travels I have met many doctors and nurses at many hospitals throughout Russia, Ukraine, Kazakstan and Uzbekistan who are very well educated and extremely dedicated, but do not at the moment have the resources to do the job that they know they can be doing," she said. "I am a very big supporter of these hospital partnerships and wish we could do even more of them because I have seen first-hand the difference they make."

Throughout her trip, Clinton said she "saw again and again how critical women were to any efforts to build democracy, support economic reform and provide for responsive social structures, particularly through the development of a strong NGO community."

Also participating in the presentation were US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, USAID Administrator J. Brian Atwood and Richard Morningstar, special adviser to the president and secretary of state for assistance to the NIS.

"America is committed to helping the New Independent States assume their rightful positions within the growing circle of strong and successful free market democracies," Albright said. "If we renew our promise to help the deserving in the NIS and elsewhere, we can see more and more children everywhere become citizens and contributors; more and more young people put down roots, build communities and become participants in the global marketplace."

Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission Reviews Progress in Health Care

On March 5, the Health Care Committee of the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission met in Washington, DC to discuss accomplishments and goals on a wide range of health issues in Russia, including AIDS, cardiovascular disease, micronutrients, and maternal and child health. The committee, headed by Russian Health Minister Tatiana Dmitrieva and US Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, commended AIHA and the partners for producing an infection control manual for use in Russian hospitals and for their work in teaching patients about self-management of diabetes.

Progress since the committee met last September includes: introduction of legislation in the Duma that mandates and standardizes micronutrient fortification of food, increased use of directly observed therapy for TB, plans to formulate a risk reduction strategy for lead and training of family planning specialists. Dmitrieva noted that the number of abortions in Russia has decreased by 24 percent over the past five years; in girls under 14 they have decreased by 41 percent. The growing number of USAID-funded family planning clinics and women's wellness centers have helped reduce the abortion rate, she said.

Russian Minister of Health Visits AIHA and Pittsburgh Partners

While in the US for the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission meeting, Russian Health Minister Tatiana Dmitrieva visited AIHA's Washington office and traveled to partner institutions Magee Women's Hospital and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Dmitrieva met with AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith, NIS Program Director Donald Harbick and representatives from USAID, the Russian Embassy and the Soros Foundation. Discussion focused on ways the Ministry of Health could further replicate AIHA's diabetes self-management and infection control programs.

Dmitrieva met in Pittsburgh with Irma Goertzen, president and CEO of Magee, and discussed a range of issues, including women's health, biotechnology, mental health and programs to reach women in underserved communities. Dmitrieva, a psychiatrist, talked about mental health issues with researchers and clinicians from the University of Pittsburgh. The partnership between Magee and Savior's Hospital for Peace and Charity focuses on women's health and family planning. Magee and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center also are partners with hospitals in Minsk, Belarus.

Nursing Resource Centers Open Across CEE

Nurses in Tuzla, Bosnia and Kosice, Slovak Republic celebrated the opening of two Nursing Resource Centers (NRCs) in March, kicking off a series of spring NRC openings across CEE.

US Ambassador to Bosnia Richard Kauzlarich attended the March 5 opening of the Tuzla NRC at the University Clinical Center of Tuzla, while Kosice Faculty Hospital inaugurated its NRC March 8. As educational and training sites for nurses from throughout the partnership hospitals' immediate region, the centers are equipped with books, mannequins, educational videos, CD-ROMs and a variety of other educational equipment such as VCRs and slide projectors. The NRCs provide an avenue for nurses to disseminate information, expand their clinical and leadership skills and develop materials for workshops and conferences.

Four additional NRCs were scheduled to open in the Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Croatia and Hungary in April and May. The first NRC in CEE opened in Riga, Latvia last September.

Central Asian Representatives Participate in Quality Assurance Workshops

Twenty-three physicians from AIHA and non-partnership health care facilities in Kazakstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan participated in a three-week study tour on quality assurance in Iowa and Illinois in March. Organized by AIHA and sponsored by the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, DC, the workshop included review and development of standards of patient care and quality assurance.

"This is an important visit because these are the people who can make change happen in their republics [with] the general concepts and specific techniques for introducing change in their health care systems that we are providing to them," said Phil Latessa, partner representative for the Stavropol Krai-Iowa hospital.

The study tour began at AIHA partnership hospitals in Des Moines, Iowa, and included discussion of quality control and evidence-based practice guidelines. Coursework was enhanced by field trips to local and outlying rural Iowa health systems and associations, including the Association of Iowa Hospitals and Health Systems, the Central Iowa Health System, Grinnell Regional Medical Center and the Principal Insurance Company.

In Chicago, Illinois, partners learned about Premier Inc.'s Quality Indicators program, and designed individual action plans for measuring health care performance and for developing accreditation, licensure, credentialing and monitoring systems. Representatives also participated in an exercise with the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) to gain a practical understanding of the policies, procedures and practices associated with hospital accreditation. Participants toured the Joint Commission International (JCI), a partnership between the JCAHO and Quality Healthcare Resources, Inc. (QHR) to learn about ongoing JCAHO initiatives to design and evaluate tools for measuring health care performance.

Women's Wellness Center Staff Prepare for Opening of Regional Centers

From learning about contraception technology to patient record databases, staff of Women's Wellness Centers (WWCs) participated in a variety of training activities in preparation for the spring opening of five centers (See WWC Openings, below).

In February, representatives from 12 WWCs in the NIS attended a computer database training program in L'viv, Ukraine. Conducted by AIHA Moscow office staff, the program trained staff on the use and design of patient record databases. Staff of the WWCs received computer-based training on both the general-use database Microsoft Access as well as on one specially designed for the centers to collect information on individual patients and to generate statistical information on patient populations.

Conferences held at Donetsk Oblast Trauma Hospital in Ukraine and at Savior's Hospital for Peace and Charity in Moscow in March promoted the use of modern contraceptive technology, family planning counseling and reproductive health education. The conferences were part of a

series of workshops conducted by AIHA to teach about health promotion and disease prevention for women of all ages.

Representatives from NIS Women's Wellness Centers (WWCs) and the NIS Advisory Committee for Clinical Practice Guidelines in Moscow, Russia, also participated in a consensus planning meeting on clinical practice guidelines in Moscow in late March. US and NIS partners from the centers and the Women's Health Task Force, together with key Health Ministry representatives from Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, discussed issues of quality assurance, management of patient flow and ideas for WWC sustainability. The meeting also built on clinical practice guidelines developed by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists that were adapted during the first clinical practice meeting in Washington, DC earlier this year.

Following the two-day meeting, US and NIS WWC representatives attended a three-day workshop on quality improvement, management and business planning issues for the sustainability of their centers. Included in discussions were case studies of model WWC programs in Yerevan, Armenia and Chisinau, Moldova.

Five Women's Wellness Centers Open

AIHA celebrated the opening of five Women's Wellness Centers (WWC) in April and May.

Stavropol Krai-Iowa partners opened the enhanced Women's Wellness Center (WWC) at Essentuki Medical Center on April 6. The newly opened Lamaze childbirth and patient education rooms were developed with the help of US partners at various Iowa hospitals, to promote greater patient involvement in their care. For example, women can learn about breast self-examination, proper diet and exercise habits, and the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases. Fatherhood classes are also offered.

Lubov Sarokina, MD, director of the Essentuki WWC, noted that her facility's comprehensive approach to women's health sets her center apart from other facilities in the krai, which typically provide a limited range of health services for women of childbearing age. With the assistance and support of US colleagues in Iowa, Sarokina and her staff have developed public service announcements on a range of women's health topics--from reproductive health to postmenopausal health issues--which are aired twice weekly on a local radio station and on television twice a month. The center also holds adolescent consulting services in a specially designated teenager room.

"Teenagers feel less inhibited to talk freely about reproductive health issues and on questions they might have about their health because they are in a comfortable environment," said Linda Brown, MPH, Iowa hospital partnership volunteer.

On May 12, AIHA celebrated the opening of a satellite center in central Yerevan, Armenia. Modeled after the WWC at Erebuni Medical Center in Yerevan, the satellite center aims to provide health promotion and disease prevention services to an estimated 20 female patients a day. The satellite clinic is under the direction of Georgi Okoev, MD.

Additional WWCs opened in St. Petersburg, Russia on April 20; in Dubna, Russia on April 27; and in Minsk, Belarus, on April 28. These centers share a common goal of providing adolescent sex education classes, family planning counseling, and health promotion and disease prevention services to women of all ages.

Armenia Appoints New Chief Nurse in Health Ministry

Rosanna Ginosian, RN, was appointed the new chief nurse in the Armenian Health Ministry in February. Ginosian, who continues to serve as the head nurse at Emergency Hospital in

Yerevan, has worked extensively with AIHA hospital partners at Boston University Medical Center in Massachusetts to promote advances in the nursing profession. Ginosian has served as director of the AIHA Nursing Resource Center at Emergency Hospital, which was created in June 1997 through the Yerevan-Boston partnership to help foster ongoing learning opportunities and support partnership nursing initiatives. Ginosian is also credited with the creation of the hospital's first journal club for nurses, which promotes an open forum of discussion on the nursing profession.

As Chief Nurse in the Armenian Health Ministry, Ginosian said she hopes to further her goal of advancing the scientific and practical level of nurses in Armenia. Toward that goal, Ginosian is already working to develop nursing programs with increased educational training for nurses throughout Armenia.

Slovak Nurses Convene National Conference

The Slovak Nursing Society and AIHA partnerships in Slovak Republic sponsored a national conference in Bratislava in March to address the rewards and challenges of community nursing. About 70 nurses attended the March 4-6 event, which focused on home care and hospice nursing, and nursing in social service institutions.

Featured speakers included: Lubomir Javorsky, Minister of Health for Slovak Republic; Ralph Johnson, US Ambassador to Slovak Republic; Paula Goddard, USAID Representative to Slovak Republic; and P. Kresanek, mayor of Bratislava. US and Hungarian nursing partners also made presentations.

Nursing Resource Center Opens in Tbilisi

The Tbilisi, Georgia Nursing Resource Center opened on March 15, marking the creation of the 12th AIHA center in the NIS. Attending the opening ceremony were Georgian Health Minister Avtandil Jorbenadze, Chairman of the Georgia's All-Citizens' Union Mikhail Machavariani, Vice-mayor of Tbilisi city government Gigi Tsereteli, representatives of the American Embassy, USAID in Tbilisi and the World Bank, and nurses from several clinics in Tbilisi.

The center is located at the National Health Management Center in Tbilisi, and is directed by Maya Gogashvili, RN, who has participated in numerous AIHA nursing workshops and regional nurse leadership conferences in the Caucasus. The next NRC is scheduled to open in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in early May.

World Health Day Focuses on Safe Motherhood

The World Health Organization's annual event, World Health Day, this year focused on maternal and child health issues. On April 7, health care institutions, government agencies and non-governmental organizations held events to promote access to family planning, prenatal care, safe and hygienic labor, and neonatal care.

According to WHO Director-General Hiroshi Nakajima, WHO has not made adequate strides in maternal health. "The tragedy of maternal mortality represents a major source of suffering and injustice in our societies," he said. "Pregnancy and childbirth are special events in women's lives, and, indeed, in the lives of their families. This can be a time of great hope and joyful anticipation. It can also be a time of fear, suffering and even death."

Maternal mortality in CEE and the NIS is markedly higher than in the European Union. About 21 of every 100,000 giving birth in CEE die as a result of childbirth, and about 41 women die in childbirth in the NIS. The European Union's rate is about seven per 100,000.

AIHA's Women's Wellness Centers are helping address concerns about maternal and child health through education on nutrition for pregnant women, childbirth preparation and contraception. AIHA's neonatal resuscitation training initiative has taught neonatologists techniques for saving premature and at-risk infants.