

Partnership Works

Almaty-Tucson

The Almaty Toxicology Center in Kazakhstan received a \$27,000 grant from New York-based Soros Foundation in April to promote the development of public education and poison prevention initiatives in the region.

Toxicology Center Director Elzhan Birtanov, MD, said the Soros funding will be used to purchase computers and video cassette recorders to expand the center's existing public health outreach efforts in local schools and community organizations. The grant will also allow the center to produce television, print and radio campaigns that increase public awareness on prevention and treatment of poisonings.

Educational materials were also important tools for the more than 40 physicians attending the center's first city-wide clinical toxicology workshop. Held from April 16 to 19 at the Almaty First Aid Hospital, this workshop was designed to respond to the rise in the number of acute poisonings in the city, Birtanov said. Doctors need to be prepared to manage patients with different types of poisonings, especially because no postgraduate toxicology training exists in Almaty yet, he noted. The workshop was hosted by the Almaty-Tucson partnership.

Moscow-Austin

When Moscow residents turned on their televisions this spring, scenes from various disasters flashed before their eyes, and a narrator then asked the audience what it would do in an emergency situation. This 30-second televised public service announcement was one of numerous PSAs aired regularly on a local Moscow television channel by the AIHA-supported Moscow Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Training Center to encourage residents to take a proactive part in emergency first response.

The PSAs provide instruction in basic life support, and are televised following a popular weekly television series, "Rescue 911"—which shows its audience actual footage of disasters and emergency medical and search/rescue team responses. This program is "very convincing that there is a need for improving the public's knowledge about basic life support techniques," said Colin Lowry, production coordinator of the Austin Fire-EMS Media who filmed the footage used in the PSA clips.

The Moscow EMS Center also conducted its first basic life support course in emergency response in April. Approximately 50 first-responders, including six flight attendants from the five-year-old Russian airline company Transaero, received hands-on instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, splinting and bandaging. The 48-hour-long course was provided to two consecutive Transaero teams in April by Austin and Moscow EMS instructors who are working to refine EMS response and the level of first response care among Moscow residents.

"Because emergencies can happen at any time and any place, it is especially important that people are trained in basic life support," said Sue Edwards, director of the city of Austin/Travis County EMS and coordinator for the Moscow-Austin partnership.

The Moscow EMS Center also provides 100-hour-long advanced life support courses on a monthly basis. This fall, the center plans to expand its training to include instruction of EMS personnel from Zelenogorsk, a formerly closed nuclear city situated east of Moscow.

Vac-Winston-Salem

Organizational planning; quality, information, and human resources management; team building; communications; and financial management were among the topics addressed at a March leadership course offered for nurse leaders and department heads from Vac Municipal Hospital in Vac, Hungary.

About 30 health care professionals took part in the 10-day course, taught by faculty from Carolina Medicorp, Inc. of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This is the first time the leadership course was offered for Vac Municipal Hospital staff. A Vac city council member, a representative from the city health authority, and Hungarian Ministry of Health representatives also attended.

Dubna-LaCrosse

Collaboration in activities from education to music to health care were highlighted as the town of Dubna, Russia celebrated America Week with its sister city LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

The May 18 to 25 event included a one-day health conference sponsored by the AIHA Dubna-LaCrosse hospital partnership. The conference featured partnership advances in diabetes management, alcohol counseling and cardiac rehabilitation since the program's inception five years ago. Partners distributed informational brochures highlighting accomplishments in these areas, and discussed the regional renal dialysis unit at Central City Hospital, which opened recently, following more than three years of preparation and training. The unit houses two dialysis machines, eliminating the four-hour round trip patients made to Moscow three times a week for dialysis.

L'viv-Detroit

More than 190 physicians and nurses from seven oblasts in western Ukraine participated in the Second Annual Neonatal Conference in L'viv, Ukraine in May to learn how to diagnose and treat common problems of newborns.

During the two-day conference, neonatologists and nurses from the L'viv-Detroit partnership presented collaborative approaches that have been successfully implemented in the management of respiratory distress in the newborn, care of the very low birth weight infant (less than 1500 grams), mechanical ventilation, treatment of jaundice and sepsis, infection control and neonatal transport. L'viv staff also shared practical problems encountered in the implementation of these strategies. The conference was supported by the L'viv Oblast Health Department, which has been instrumental in the implementation of the region's first neonatal resuscitation training program, administered through the L'viv Neonatal Resuscitation Training Center, one of two such AIHA-affiliated centers in Ukraine.

Moscow-Chicago

Patients at Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow are more satisfied with the quality of their care, thanks in part to the introduction of ongoing workshops in customer service this spring.

"We now see our patients as clients," said Svetlana Antonova, head nurse of the International Patient Department (IPD) at CCH, a graduated AIHA partnership hospital with Premier, Inc. in Chicago, Illinois. "Our relationship to our patients has improved, in part because we see our role differently."

Patient satisfaction is "one of the most important issues to providers of the department...because, if the patient is not satisfied with the services he is receiving, he will go elsewhere," said Antonova, who attended an April workshop.

A major change in customer service emphasized in the one-day program was greater nurse-patient interaction. The independent consultants hired by Premier, Inc. to conduct the workshop encouraged IPD staff to incorporate staff-patient communication skills into traditional training programs. For example, traditionally, a patient's family--rather than the patient himself--was informed of the patient's medical condition if he was diagnosed with a terminal cancer. Now patients in the IPD now are informed of their diagnosis, because "that helps to ensure not only greater patient satisfaction, but also greater patient involvement in the process of healing," Antonova said.

Use of patient satisfaction surveys were suggested by workshop educators to increase patient input in the quality of care. In addition, the workshop offered team-building skills and patient and visitor follow-up skills. Antonova and three other nurse educators who attended the training held a follow-up workshop on June 10 for 30 colleagues from housekeeping, dietary, therapy, support service and administrative services from numerous departments at CCH.

Riga-St. Louis

In their effort to isolate bacteria and test different antibiotic drugs in treating bacterial infections, laboratory researchers at Republic Children's Hospital in Riga, Latvia are getting help from an unlikely source: four neutered male sheep at the Riga Zoo. The alliance between the hospital and the zoo was launched in May when scientists began drawing small amounts of the sheeps' blood each week in a "clean room" located next to the zoo's sheep pen. The blood will be used to make blood auger plates-- nutrient-rich blood mixtures that are necessary to grow bacteria in a laboratory setting.

Finding an inexpensive source of clean, antibiotic-free blood to make the plates has been difficult in Latvia. When researchers in Riga approached their partners at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Missouri for suggestions in solving the problem, the US partners came up with the zoo idea. "It is modeled on the special relationship between the St. Louis Zoo and the children's hospital here, who have participated in many joint fund-raising and community projects together," said Barbara Bogomolov, RN, MS, manager for Community Health and International Services at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

In return for the Riga Zoo's help in caring for the sheep, feeding them special antibiotic-free feed, and maintaining a sterile room for drawing the blood, the Riga-St. Louis partnership has enlisted the St. Louis Zoo to give advice and technical support to its Baltic counterpart to help establish a permanent petting zoo, which will include the four sheep. "There has been a lot of interest in this project, and the cost has been minimal--the only cost has been to create the clean room at the zoo and purchase the sheep," noted Bogomolov.