

Partnership Works

Martin/Banska Bystrica-Cleveland

Turcianske Teplice-Cleveland

The Slovak cities of Martin and Banska Bystrica kicked off a new community health partnership with The MetroHealth System of Cleveland, Ohio February 11 when city officials signed two memoranda of understanding (MOU). The mayors of each city and several AIHA staff members attended the signings. During the same week, partners also participated in a two-day workshop to learn about MetroHealth's one-year-old partnership with the nearby town of Turcianske Teplice, and to engage in discussion of current health care delivery and policy issues in Slovakia and the US.

"We appreciate that AIHA is looking beyond the capital city to our region. So many international initiatives begin and end in Bratislava," said Alexander Zacharides, Martin's partnership coordinator.

The new partnership is expected to focus on developing a capacity for health system planning and decision making; defining the role of local government and community-based organizations in developing and influencing health policy; conducting community health assessments; mobilizing citizens from diverse sectors of the community to effect change; and facilitating the establishment of local health councils.

In a separate event held during the workshop, a check for \$1,600 was presented to Turcianske Teplice Mayor Alena Chlapňaková from Cleveland-Bratislava Sister Cities (CBSC) to outfit the town's new ambulance, recently purchased with the help of partnership donations. CBSC raised the money by raffling off prizes in Cleveland, including autographed baseballs from the Cleveland Indians baseball team.

Murmansk-Jacksonville

A team of five Murmansk-area surgeons, clinical nurses and an anesthesiologist performed their first surgical assist with US partners in Jacksonville, Florida in February. The surgical team worked as teaching fellows in laparoscopic surgery with US surgeons at Jacksonville's Memorial Hospital. As part of their training, surgeons from Murmansk Regional Hospital and City Ambulance Center in Murmansk, Russia assisted US surgeons in laparoscopic surgery, and participated in discussions on early diagnosis skills and anesthesia in laparoscopy. The Murmansk doctors had a one-month license to practice in the United States.

The Murmansk-Jacksonville hospital partnership has conducted two regional laparoscopic surgery conferences in Murmansk in the past three years, and has sponsored numerous surgical workshops. Murmansk surgeons reported that increased use of laparoscopic surgery has reduced postsurgical infection rates and length of stay in their hospitals, from an average 18 days in 1994 to three days in 1995 for gallbladder operations.

L'viv-Detroit

Neonatologists in L'viv hope to save hundreds of premature infants in Ukraine with help from the country's first neonatal resuscitation training center. The January 10 grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony at the center, located at L'viv Oblast Clinical Hospital (LOCH) was attended by Greg Huger, director of the regional USAID mission for Ukraine, Moldova and

Belarus; Elena Sulima, MD, chief of neonatology for the Ukrainian Ministry of Health; and Mykhola Khobzei, head of the L'viv Oblast Health Administration.

The L'viv Center is supported by the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, which approved a resolution last May to replicate the AIHA neonatal resuscitation model throughout Ukraine. Created under the auspices of the AIHA L'viv-Detroit partnership, the center has already trained more than 160 health care personnel from the region on improving the level of infant care both at the Premature Baby Unit within LOCH and for infants throughout the oblast.

The center also received a visit on February 26 from First Lady of Ukraine Ludmilla Kuchma. While at LOCH, the First Lady met with staff of the neonatal unit, toured the training center and viewed the newest shipment of partnership donated supplies that arrived earlier this year, including an ambulance and infant transporter through efforts of the Detroit partners.

AIHA plans to open four additional neonatal resuscitation centers modeled after the L'viv Center this spring and summer in Kiev; Moscow; and Tashkent and Urgench, Uzbekistan.

Almaty-Tucson

The Arizona Air National Guard is traditionally known for its precision in air tactical maneuvers. But last winter it took on a more earthbound mission: preparing a shipment of over \$163,000 in donated medical equipment for use in Kazakstan. The 162 Wind Division of the Arizona Air National Guard assisted AIHA partners in Tucson, Arizona in packaging and preparing the January 16 donation of medical equipment and supplies, which were transported on a US Department of Defense cargo plane. The shipment included medications and supplies for AIHA partner hospitals in Almaty, Kazakstan, and a mobile tuberculosis clinic donated by Project Hope for use in southwestern Kazakstan, where tuberculosis is a serious concern, said Emily Jenkins, US hospital partner director in Tucson.

The Arizona guard has been training Kazak military troops since 1994 as part of the US "Partnership for Peace" program, a US government program designed to promote peaceful exchange of military personnel between the US and the NIS. The Guard has assisted in three previous Tucson partnership shipments to Kazakstan.

Tbilisi-Atlanta

Georgian Republic partners received an \$81,000 equipment donation over the winter from their partners in Atlanta, Georgia. A 20-foot container left Charlestown, North Carolina on January 2 as part of a humanitarian shipment to the Republic of Georgia organized by "Operation Support Freedom," the MPRI (Military Professional Resources Incorporated)-NIS/US Department of State agent providing humanitarian shipments to the NIS.

This third Tbilisi-Atlanta partnership donation arrived in Poti, Georgia a month later, and included fetal monitors, ultrasound machines and tuberculosis lab units. Medical literature for partnership hospitals and the National Learning Resource Center in Tbilisi, Georgia was also included in the shipment.

Bishkek-Kansas City

In 1993, a 17-year-old patient in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan began experiencing severe headaches and blurred vision in her left eye. By 1996, her headaches became increasingly worse and frequent, and her physicians suspected a possible link with a childhood fall that resulted in a concussion.

The patient underwent a series of CT scans and MRIs at the Bishkek Institute of Oncology and Radiology. Her physicians discovered that she had a sizable mass of tissue in her left temporal lobe that may have caused the seizures. Yet, the images did not allow the physicians to make a conclusive diagnosis.

In January, the physicians enlisted the support of Galina Sergeeva, information coordinator for the partnership in Bishkek. Sergeeva immediately sent the patient's diagnostic images and case history to AIHA partners throughout the NIS and US for a second opinion by use of a simple tool--the Internet. Within minutes, the patient's case history, CT and MRI scans were on the desk of US partners at the University of Kansas Medical Center (KUMC) in Kansas City and 25 other AIHA hospitals throughout the US and NIS.

"We took full advantage of the Internet tools provided to us by AIHA," said Sergeeva. "These tools are proving to be invaluable in helping many of our patients."

From Chisinau, Moldova to St. Petersburg, Russia to Almaty, Kazakstan to Orlando, Florida, physicians reviewed the diagnostic images and provided their professional opinions on the case. Neurosurgeons at Almaty's City Hospital provided insight into similar cases involving seizures and possible treatment. Neurosurgeons at KUMC provided a detailed consult, determined the girl's cyst was benign and sent copies of the latest medical text on diagnosing cysts of the brain to their colleagues in Bishkek. Although Bishkek physicians have not yet made a final diagnosis, they have noted improvements in the patient's condition that they attribute to Internet consultations with their medical colleagues around the globe, Sergeeva said.

Sergeeva hopes to continue to use the Internet as a tool for patient consultations. "The Internet brings medical professionals around the world together, and is so important in my profession," she said.

Moscow-Pittsburgh

On March 15 and 16, Savior's Hospital for Peace and Charity in Moscow hosted the city's first international women's wellness festival.

Hundreds of women in the Moscow area attended the two-day health fair at the Kinotsentr Exhibit Hall to learn more about smoking cessation, cholesterol screening and nutritional information. US partners at Magee Womancare International in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a Russian Federation Ministry of Health representative made opening remarks. The event was sponsored by Avon Cosmetics Ltd., Magee Womancare International, Upjohn Pharmaceuticals and Johnson & Johnson Russia.

Zagreb-Lebanon

A new pilot project on nurse-physician "collaborative practice" at Sveti Duh General Hospital in Zagreb, Croatia, is setting out to prove that establishing trust, respect and effective communication between the two professions can improve patient care as well as create a more harmonious hospital working environment.

Launched this winter in the hospital's orthopedics and coronary intensive care units, the Zagreb-Lebanon partnership project seeks to identify which collaborative clinical settings and role assignments will yield the best patient care. "The nurses at Sveti Duh identified this project," said Pamela Thompson, RN, MSN, of Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (DHMC). "They believed it was more important to work on their collaborative relationship with physicians than to continue with separate initiatives."

The hospital's orthopedics department has already distributed two separate surveys--one to patients and one to health care providers--in order to determine how well physicians and nurses are working together and how patients perceive this relationship. The survey asks patients questions like: Did your physician explain the reason for your admission to the hospital? Who did you communicate with on a daily basis during your stay? Questions for providers include: Is it important to you that others recognize your skills? Do you think that rounds are the only time that nurses and physicians communicate? Survey results are currently being tabulated.

In February, nine nurses and physicians from Sveti Duh traveled to DHMC to discuss with US partners ways to build effective work groups through using tools like flow charts and methods like conflict resolution. Partners plan to make a presentation on the progress of the collaborative practice initiative in May at the CEE Partnership Conference in Zagreb.

Bohemia-Nevada

After a year of collaborating with colleagues at the University of Nevada, faculty at South Bohemia University in Jindich v Hradec, Czech Republic, kicked off a new health management degree program in February. Forty-three students have enrolled in the three-and-a-half-year bachelor's-level course of study, which focuses on health care financing and health care facilities management.

The university held a ceremony on February 19 to mark the program's first day of classes. Speakers included James Bednar, USAID representative to the Czech Republic; Vladimir Spidla, chairman of the health care committee of the Czech Parliament; Vladimir Roskovec, head of the Department of Universities, Czech Ministry of Education; Zdenek Zemlicka, dean of the faculty of management at South Bohemia University, and Sona Strbanova, AIHA country coordinator for the Czech Republic and Hungary. "Students who finish this program of study should be able to develop a business plan and carry out marketing studies for a certain health care facility. They should be able to propose a strategy or make gradual steps themselves to implement the strategy, incorporating bookkeeping, organizational, financial and economic aspects," noted the program's chairs.

Chisinau-Minneapolis

Lights, camera, action! These are not the commands typically encountered by emergency medical system (EMS) teams. But the Chisinau, Moldova EMS team learned the television protocols as a CBS-affiliate TV crew in Minneapolis, Minnesota filmed their mock disaster drill in February.

Staged at the Emergency Training Center at Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC) in Minneapolis, the simulated fire disaster drill documented the Chisinau team's precision in mass casualty response, which the EMS team attributes to their three-year collaborative efforts with US EMS instructors at HCMC. The interview aired on a local news show for viewers in Minnesota and in the neighboring states of Wisconsin and Iowa.

Almaty-Tucson

Amantai Birtanov, MD, chief physician of the Almaty First Aid Hospital in Kazakhstan was awarded a presidential citation for his contributions in the field of health. Birtanov was one of 100 Kazak professionals to receive this first-time award as a "Meritorious Laborer of Kazakhstan" from the five-year-old Kazak government in March.

A graduate of Almaty State Medical Institute in 1970, Birtanov became the chief physician of First Aid Hospital in 1992, where he introduced one of the region's first toxicology centers. He

said he attributes a great deal of his success and the award to his four-year collaboration with US colleagues in Tucson, Arizona, home of the US side of the hospital partnership.