

A Note from the Executive Director

This summer, AIHA marks four years since the start of the partnership program. Initially, the partnerships focused primarily on direct exchanges between hospitals in the NIS and the US. While those activities remain very much at the heart of AIHA's program, I was struck during my visits over a recent eight-week period to Central Europe, Central Asia, and Russia by just how seriously the partnerships are taking responsibility for disseminating information and educating their colleagues in other regions of their own countries and by the extent of their collaboration in interpartnership and multinational activities. This issue of *CommonHealth*--whose circulation has been increased to allow us to reach thousands of additional health professionals in the NIS and CEE--highlights a number of recent examples of this extensive cooperation.

- In Budapest, Hungary at the first annual conference for the Central and Eastern European partnerships, more than 200 health care professionals from nine countries overcame not only language barriers but also professional ones to share their successes and their challenges and to begin integrating the efforts of hospital, health management education, and healthy community partnerships.
- In Almaty, Kazakstan, more than 200 nurses and nurse educators from 12 NIS countries and the United States held their second annual meeting. The remarkable progress that was shared underscores the critical importance of nursing to health reform in the region. One indicator of that progress was the very positive assessment by a panel of international nursing experts of the first graduating class of Almaty Medical College's new baccalaureate nursing program.
- In a series of meetings in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, I not only heard government leaders reinforce their commitment to the partnership program and to working together regionally, but also encountered dozens of health care professionals in rural areas and smaller cities who have benefited from the outreach of the partnership institutions.
- In Moscow, at the Medicine For You Conference sponsored by the Russian Federation Ministry of Health and Medical Industry, representatives from 15 partner institutions demonstrated regional collaboration by conducting demonstrations in emergency training, prepared childbirth, and diabetes disease management and by making presentations to a congress of health professionals gathered to review progress in health care in the region since 1993. AIHA's NIS colleagues represented a significant percentage of invited presenters and collaborated in the largest single exhibition area at the conference.
- This leadership is also being demonstrated at the highest policy levels. In June, the World Health Organization (WHO) convened its Conference on European Health Reform in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where the partnerships' contribution to the many aspects of health reform was highlighted.

These are just the more visible recent examples of programmatic expansion and outreach that are critical to helping us achieve our mutual goal of creating sustainable changes in health care systems that reach far beyond the potential of one-on-one partnerships. By connecting health professionals--who would otherwise be working in isolation--and collaborating with Ministries of Health and regional and international bodies such as WHO, partnerships are improving the health of whole nations.