

Connections



Highlights from the American International Health Alliance's Development Programs in the EECA Region

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St. Petersburg Center Focuses on Training HIV/AIDS Specialists in Russia, Improving Care for PLWHA

AIHA has joined forces with the St. Petersburg Medical Academy for Post Graduate Studies and affiliated clinical sites at the St. Petersburg AIDS Center and the Ust Izhora Clinical Center for Children and Women with HIV to establish an AIDS Training and Education Center (ATEC) in Saint Petersburg, Russia.

Developed with funding from USAID and supported by the Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development, this project represents a key step in the development of a unified framework for Russia's national efforts to build the health system capacity necessary to provide high-quality care to PLWHA.

Officially opened in November, St. Petersburg ATEC and its clinical sites are helping develop the

institutional and human resource capacity Russia needs to reach its HIV/AIDS care and treatment goals through targeted training for physicians, nurses, and social workers. Training courses are also targeting healthcare policymakers and clinic administrators, as well as allied care professionals ranging from psychologists and laboratory technicians to peer counselors and NGO representatives, to better ensure comprehensive, accessible care for PLWHA.

With support from the Russian Healthcare Foundation—the Global Fund's principle recipient in Russia—ATEC is initially focusing on building capacity in Altay, Bashkyrtostan, Chelyabinsk, Irkutsk, Kemerovo, Krasnodar, Perm, Rostov, Saratov, Sverd-

lovsk, Volgograd, and Ulyanovsk, which are designated priority areas under Global Fund's round-four grants.



Classroom activities at ATEC are augmented by clinical training and mentoring to ensure quality of care.

With support from other donors, courses will also be provided to healthcare professionals striving to improve HIV/AIDS-related care and treatment elsewhere in Russia and in neighboring countries.



US partner David Mertes fields questions from the Azerbaijani press following the opening of model PHC Center in Ganja.

Expanding Primary Care in Ganja, Azerbaijan

AIHA's Ganja/Livermore partners opened a model Primary Healthcare Training and Demonstration Center September 12 in Azerbaijan's second largest city, Ganja.

Since it was established in 2004, the USAID-funded partnership linking the Ganja City Health Administration with ValleyCare Health System and the Alameda

County Public Health Department in California has been working to develop the professional skills of practitioners in Ganja.

Now, through the model Primary Healthcare Center, partners are poised to play an important role in advancing the development of family medicine and community-centered primary care in Ganja

and its surrounding rural communities.

The Center helps to consolidate curative and preventive services at the primary care level and serves as a resource for training and demonstration activities for government initiatives to improve primary healthcare services and delivery in Azerbaijan.



Moldova TB Awareness Campaign Hits Transnistria, Cahul

AIHA extended its successful public awareness campaign, "Tuberculosis Can Be Treated! See the Doctor," to the Transnistria and Cahul regions in 2006.

Building on effective public awareness activities carried out in 2004 and 2005 as part of USAID's \$4 million Strengthening Tuberculosis Control in Moldova Project, last April AIHA launched similar campaigns in Transnistria's two largest cities, Bender and Tiraspol, and in Cahul and its environs last October.

Posters, brochures, and fliers detailing tuberculosis symptoms and encouraging people to seek treatment at the earliest signs of TB were widely distributed and public service announcements were broadcast on television and radio stations.

In Transnistria, AIHA trained two groups of students from local medical universities to conduct peer education on TB at area schools and colleges while in Cahul a "healthy bus" visited remote localities to hold TB semi-

nars and other educational activities where the epidemiologic situation is most problematic.

AIHA also joined forces with Moldova State Medical University's School of Public Health to conduct 20 videoconferences on TB for approximately 500 medical professionals from all regions of the country. These conferences represent the first step toward applying modern distance learning technologies to Moldova's public health arena.

Chronic hepatitis is the fifth leading cause of death in Moldova and the number one cause of death from an infectious disease.

Working closely with Emerging Markets Group, prime contractor of the USAID-funded Preventing HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B and C in Moldova/Technical Assistance Support Contract (PHH/TASC II), AIHA is spearheading efforts to improve the safety of blood and blood products in this East European nation of 4.5 million.

Moldova's rising incidence of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B (HVB), and

hepatitis C (HVC) is largely driven by declining economic and social conditions, unsafe sex, inadequate hospital infection control, and increasing numbers of vulnerable and high-risk groups.

In support of Moldova's national program and blood safety improvements already funded by the Council of Europe Bank for Development, AIHA is providing technical assistance in the form

of targeted training for key practitioners and institutions involved in blood banking and testing.

Additionally, AIHA will help establish national blood safety standards and regulations consistent with international practices and assist with the design of a management information system to better ensure the safe collection and distribution of blood and blood products.



CLDP delegates learn about effective models of healthcare delivery and meet with high-level community or national leaders, such as US Rep. Leonard Boswell of Iowa.

AIHA Receives Open World Grant, Hosts 2006 Exchanges

AIHA was recently awarded a grant from the Open World Leadership Center at the US Library of Congress, making it possible to provide civic leaders and healthcare professionals from Russia with an opportunity to get a first-hand look at effective community-based health initiatives in the United States through the Community Leadership Development Program (CLDP).

This year's Open World/CLDP exchanges took place October 19-30 and were designed to help the Russian delegates effectively leverage community resources to provide socially-oriented health services and to better address their country's HIV/AIDS epidemic.

This year's 25 delegates represented Orenburg Oblast and St.

Petersburg. Participants were introduced to local governance and civic institutions and have the opportunity to observe the US healthcare system and HIV/AIDS services delivered by American healthcare facilities, NGOs, and faith-based groups. The 2006 delegates are now part of AIHA's regional network of more than 350 Open World/CLDP alumni in Russia.

AIHA Bids Farewell to Its Programs in Central Asia

AIHA hosted a regional conference July 11-12 in Astana, Kazakhstan, to mark the close of its USAID-funded Health Partnerships Program in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

The conference served as a tribute to the dedicated volunteers and collaborating organizations that have contributed to the success of its healthcare partnerships and programs in Central Asia for the past 14 years. In particular, the event focused on

the impact of key AIHA projects designed to strengthen the region's system of education and training for healthcare professionals. The accomplishments of individual partnerships—including the regional medical education and nursing partnerships, community-oriented primary care program, and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV program—were highlighted.

AIHA's program of volunteer-driven, peer-to-peer partnerships has been an important compo-

nent of USAID's support to health reform efforts in Central Asia. More than 100 institutions, communities, universities, and schools have been involved in the healthcare partnership program; each one has played a critical role in building health sector capacity at both the national and regional levels. Key issues addressed through AIHA's programs include women's health, emergency medicine, primary care, neonatal resuscitation, infection control, HIV/AIDS, and evidence-based clinical practices.



AIHA's partnerships and programs helped usher in many positive health-related changes in Central Asia, including developing emergency response capacity at a network of five EMS Training Centers spanning the region.

Helping Prevent Pediatric HIV/AIDS in Central Asia

Located in Karaganda Oblast, Temirtau is a focal point of Kazakhstan's HIV/AIDS epidemic. Women in their reproductive years there now account for more than 35 percent of all new HIV infections, making a comprehensive strategy for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV more urgent than ever before.

Temirtau is a pilot site for replication in Kazakhstan of AIHA's highly successful PMTCT program first launched in 2000 in Odessa, Ukraine. With funding from USAID, experts from Odessa worked closely with their colleagues from Karaganda Oblast AIDS Center and the Municipal Maternity Hospital to enhance the knowledge and skills of the Kazakh practitioners and develop a core faculty capable of training others to prevent vertical transmission of HIV. As a result of this collaboration, a regional PMTCT Training Center was opened in

early 2006 at the Maternity Hospital.

The PMTCT Training Center plays a critical role in Kazakhstan's efforts to stem the spread of HIV by educating clinicians about the virus, prevention methods, and the importance of voluntary counseling and testing, particularly among pregnant women and those of reproductive age. This, in turn, helps reduce late detection of HIV infection among pregnant women and new cases of pediatric HIV—both significant problems in Kazakhstan, according to Olga Orlova, a pediatrician at the Karaganda Oblast AIDS Center.

Relying on the skill and experience of local specialists, this training center is helping build capacity among healthcare professionals in Kazakhstan and other nations in Central Asia to prevent vertical transmission of HIV. Training includes instruction

in the WHO/CDC PMTCT Generic Training Package, which was adapted by AIHA to reflect national policies, country-specific epidemiological data on HIV/AIDS, and Kazakhstan's national protocols on HIV prevention, care, and treatment.

During its first months in operation, the PMTCT Training Center in Temirtau hosted four training courses for senior faculty from medical schools throughout Kazakhstan, as well as for obstetrician/gynecologists from maternity hospitals and specialists from primary healthcare institutions in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, according to Natalya Petrova, assistant professor of infectious diseases at the Almaty Postgraduate Medical Institute and one of Kazakhstan's leading experts on HIV/AIDS. "Thanks to this program, we train more practitioners in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment each month," Petrova says.

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—Natalya Petrova, assistant professor of infectious diseases, Almaty Postgraduate Medical Institute



The American International Health Alliance

Creating vision, strengthening systems, and making a difference through volunteer-based partnerships and initiatives

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AIHA, its partnerships, and programs represent one of the US healthcare sector's most coordinated responses to a broad range of issues affecting global health. Our programs contribute to sustainable change by providing the broad-based management and programmatic support necessary to help donor institutions and health systems coordinate other forms of government or privately-sponsored development assistance.

AIHA operates under various cooperative agreements and grants from US and international donor agencies including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); the World Health Organization (WHO); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the German Society for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

For more information about AIHA, please visit us on the Web at www.aiha.com

AIHA Partners, Staff Showcase Work at AIDS 2006 Conference

AIHA was well represented at the International AIDS Society's bi-annual conference in Toronto last summer. Six posters highlighting the work of partnerships and programs were presented at the event. The conference took place August 13-18 and brought together more than 26,000 practitioners, researchers, policymakers, activists, and PLWHA from 170 countries spanning the globe.

Orenburg/New York City partners Sergei Mikhaylov of the Orenburg Oblast AIDS Center and Jackie Stith of Elmhurst Hospital Center presented an overview of their efforts to improve patient care and retention by expanding the role of nurses at the AIDS Center during a poster discussion session.

Three posters authored by AIHA staff also highlighted work specific to Russia. Arsen Kubataev, director of AIHA's office in Moscow, presented on the implementation of a PMTCT database de-

signed to monitor vertical transmission rates and prevention efforts as well as the application of AIHA's twinning methodology to improve HIV-related care and treatment at pilot sites throughout Russia. Senior Program Coordinator Stela Bivol discussed efforts to replicate a PMTCT project at target sites in Russia during her poster presentation.

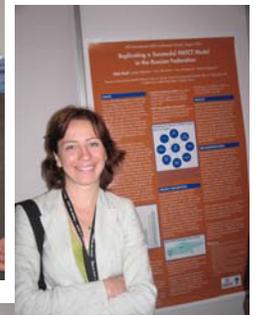
Olga Kostyuk, medical consultant to the Kyiv-based Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia, presented a poster showcasing efforts to scale up Ukraine's capacity to provide antiretroviral therapy to PLWHA.

AIHA Director for the Ukraine PMTCT-Plus Project Natalya Nizova presented a poster on the adaptation of the WHO/HHS/CDC PMTCT Generic Training Package, which is being used to build capacity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

In addition, partners and staff involved with AIHA's PEPFAR-funded HIV/AIDS Twinning Center presented six posters on their work during the conference.

Twinning Center Director Donna Anderson joined partners from Mozambique and Uganda for a panel discussion on twinning partnerships during a HRSA-sponsored satellite session that took place on August 17.

AIHA also took part in the conference's exposition, hosting an exhibit that highlighted HIV/AIDS programs from Eurasia and Africa and featured informational materials and hand-outs for participants.



From the top: James P. Smith and Arsen Kubataev; Orenburg/Elmhurst partners Jackie Stith and Sergei Mikhaylov; Stela Bivol; James P. Smith, Olga Kostyuk, and Odessa partner Svetlana Posokhova.