



## US First Lady Visits Partnership Women's Wellness Center in Tirana, Learns about Maternal and Child Health Programs

### Inside this issue:

Wisconsin Partners Honored for Voluntarism	2
PMTCT Assessment Training in Orenburg	3
Knowledge Hub Trains Case Managers in Latvia	3
ATEC-St. Petersburg Hosts Regional Faculty Training	4
Moldova PHHP Hosts Blood Donor Safety Events	4
Partner Appointed Minister of Health in Armenia	5
Building HIV/AIDS Care Capacity in Belarus	5
Milwaukee Donor Lauded for Efforts in Georgia	6
Online Course Focuses on Evidence-based Medicine	6
HIV Training for Primary Care Providers	7
Orenburg Partners Host HIV-TB Clinical Course	7
New Haven Partners Travel to St. Petersburg	8

US First Lady Laura Bush got a first-hand look at the many positive changes introduced by AIHA partners at Queen Geraldine Hospital in Tirana during her visit to Albania June 10.

Mrs. Bush toured the Tirana Women's Wellness Center (WWC), which was opened in September 2000 through the efforts of a now graduated AIHA partnership linking Queen Geraldine Hospital — formerly Maternity Hospital No. 1 — with the Women's and Infants Hospital of Rhode Island in Providence.

Mrs. Bush also visited Angel's Cradle Nursery, a special unit of the hospital that houses orphaned or abandoned infants. The nursery is supported by the Organization for the Support of Albania's Abandoned Babies.

"I've had a very good chance today to see some terrific

programs," Mrs. Bush told the group of staff, patients, and dignitaries at the Tirana WWC, encouraging them to continue their work to improve healthcare services for Albania's women and children.

Through the partnership, the Tirana WWC emerged as a pioneer in efforts to improve women's healthcare in Albania.

The center now receives more than 12,000 patient visits each year, in part because of the broad range of clinical services it provides. Patients have access to family planning, reproductive health, perinatal care, and cancer screening services, as well as primary care and mental health screening and counseling. It also offers an extensive array of education programs covering topics such as prenatal care, child birth preparation, newborn care, breast feeding, breast



US First lady Laura Bush and Albanian First Lady Dr. Liri Berisha give special attention to infants in the Angel's Cradle Nursery at Queen Geraldine Hospital.

health, sexually transmitted infections, menopause, and healthy lifestyles.

Mrs. Bush learned of these accomplishments and got a first-hand look at the many innovative programs partners have implemented at the Tirana WWC.

—A more detailed account is available at [www.aiha.com](http://www.aiha.com).

## Russian Ministry of Health Incorporates Eight AIHA Courses into National Master Training Curriculum on HIV/AIDS

The Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development approved on July 26 a Master Training Curriculum on HIV/AIDS.

Designed to enhance the skills of Russian specialists who provide treatment, care, and support to people living with HIV or AIDS, the Master Curriculum is a compilation of 17 evidence-based clinical courses. Each interactive continuing education course provides 72-144 hours of post-graduate level classroom and

bed-side training on a particular aspect of HIV-related care, such as prevention of mother-to-child transmission, provision of antiretroviral therapy, HIV and TB co-infection, and lab diagnostics.

Eight of these courses are based on training materials developed and piloted by AIHA under the framework of the Bratislava Initiatives signed in the Slovak capital by Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President George W. Bush in 2005.

The AIHA-developed courses are also among the more than 20 HIV/AIDS care courses taught at the AIDS Training and Education Center established by AIHA, the St. Petersburg Medical Academy for Postgraduate Studies, and various strategic partners last year in St. Petersburg. These courses are also offered at the Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia, which is based in Kyiv, Ukraine.

## Wisconsin Partners Receive President's Volunteer Service Awards for Work in Eastern Europe, Caucasus



Members of the Dubna/La Crosse partnership dedicated the David Bell Rotunda and Russian Garden in La Crosse on July 12.



Dubna Mayor Valeriy Prokh, AIHA Program Officer Kate Schecter, World Services of La Crosse, Inc. President Sandy McCormick, and USAID Europe and Eurasia Bureau Chief of Staff Brock Bierman.



Staff and volunteers affiliated with the Milwaukee-based Center for International Health with AIHA's Kate Schecter and USAID's Brock Bierman following the award ceremony on July 13.

AIHA partners from the Wisconsin cities of Appleton, La Crosse, and Milwaukee were presented in July with the President's Volunteer Service Award in recognition of their efforts to improve health-care service delivery in Armenia, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine.

USAID Europe and Eurasia Bureau Chief of Staff Brock Bierman presented individual and organizational awards to 31 partners at two ceremonies in La Crosse on July 12.

Commending them for their "courage, generosity, compassion, and extraordinary efforts," Bierman told partners they "have lent their considerable professional talents to realize the bold vision of a healthier future for communities clear across the globe."

La Crosse has participated in three highly successful AIHA partnerships since 1992, effectively harnessing the expertise of area institutions and healthcare providers, and other allied professionals to greatly improve health service delivery in Dubna, Russia (1992-1999); Kharkiv, Ukraine (1999-2004); and Guria, Georgia (2004-present).

Appleton's primary healthcare partnership with the Russian cities of Kurgan and Schuche (1999-2004) resulted in marked improvements in patient care through community-based

programs that addressed issues ranging from domestic violence to neonatal care.

La Crosse and Appleton partners were also active in AIHA's Community Leadership Development Program, funded by the Open World Leadership Center at the US Library of Congress.

Bierman presented Life Time Service Awards — given in recognition of 4,000 or more hours of service — to Mary A. Anderson, Sandra J. McCormick, and Kermit L. Newcomer.

David J. Allen, Montgomery Elmer, Michael Garrity, Agnes E. Hoeger, Maureen Jameson, Deborah Lutjen, Cheri L. Olson, Lisa Radtke, and Mary Thompson received Gold Awards honoring 500 or more hours of service.

Silver Awards were presented to Karen Beneke, Martha Binn, Peter M. Keefe, Elizabeth Leschensky, Michael H. Mader, John D. Medinger, Suzanne Merkl, Martha Schwem, and Joyce L. White for their 205-499 hours of service.

Bronze Awards — presented for 100-249 hours volunteered — were given to Julie R. Bartels, Nancy R. Bumgarner, Jeff Court, David Houge, Jan V. Jarvinen, Mark E. Jolivet, Don Jobe, Douglas N. Mormann, Sally S. Sibbald, and Richard H. Strauss.

In conjunction with the awards ceremony, the La Crosse Dubna Friendship Association dedicated the Russian Garden and the David Bell Rotunda in the city's International Friendship Garden located in Riverside Park on the shores of the Mississippi River.

AIHA partners at the Center for International Health (CIH) in Milwaukee were honored at a ceremony the following day. Bierman presented awards to 34 area healthcare professionals, praising them for their efforts to improve primary healthcare services in Lori, Armenia (2003-2004); Mtskheta-Mtianeti,

Georgia (1999-2004); and Gori, Georgia (2004-present).

CIH partners were also recognized for their participation in a partnership designed to strengthen HIV/AIDS-related pharmacy services at Pediatric ART Centers of Excellence in Zambia.

Now in its first year, this partnership links CIH with University Hospital in Lusaka and District General Hospital in Livingstone. It is funded through AIHA's HIV/AIDS Twinning Center in support of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Frederick Tavill and John R. Petersen received Life Time Service Awards from Bierman.

Mark Anderson, Eugenie Hildebrandt, Michael Mazzone, Peter Sigmann, Jeff Stewart, Clarence Grim, Carlene Grim, Mary Newcomb, Darlene Weis, and Sue Matson were presented with Gold Awards.

Silver Awards were presented to Iva Bakhutashvili, Lawrence Clowry, Nino Dgebuadze, Seth Foldy, Cesar Gonzalez, Paula Lucey, and Ronald Pruhs.

Mary Jo Baish, Jonathan Crowder, David Fay, Chris Wenninger, Gaither Bynum, Kelly Geiger, Warren LeMay, Geoffrey Lamb, Veronica Pruhs, James Sanders, Leslie Schulz, David Schieder-mayer, Peter Thornquist, Lora Taylor, Andrea Zabel, Terry Tobin, Peter Havens, and Tom Lausten received Bronze Awards.

The President's Volunteer Service Award honors exemplars of the American spirit of altruism and encourages all Americans to embrace volunteer service and civic participation for the good of all people at home and abroad.

## AIHA Experts Conduct PMTCT Assessment Training, Site Surveys in Russia's Orenburg Oblast

AIHA conducted a workshop in Orenburg May 16-18 to train a core group of local clinicians on how to conduct site preparedness assessments at area institutions responsible for providing services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV.

Specialists from AIDS Centers, maternity hospitals, and children's polyclinics in the Orenburg Oblast cities of Gai, Novotroitsk, Orenburg, and Orsk, as well as a specialist from the

city of Chelyabinsk, attended the three-day training.

The overarching objective of the workshop was to train participants how to effectively monitor and assess PMTCT services to ensure they are being implemented in accordance with national guidelines and international best practices endorsed by WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA.

To this end, course instructors Natalia Nizova, director of AIHA's USAID-funded Ukraine PMTCT-

Plus Project, and Irina Shumilova, information and communication technology/monitoring and evaluation coordinator at AIHA's Moscow Office introduced key elements of survey instruments and helped participants develop their own questionnaires.

The workshop concluded with practical exercises at four PMTCT service sites in Orenburg, including an antenatal clinic, a maternity hospital, a children's polyclinic, and social care center for families and children.



Workshop participants and AIHA PMTCT expert Natalia Nizova (right) visited four clinical sites, where trainees gained practical experience in the prevention of vertical transmission of HIV/

## AIHA and Regional Knowledge Hub Conduct HIV/AIDS Case Management Training in Estonia

AIHA and the Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia conducted an HIV/AIDS Case Management training course in the Estonian capital of Tallinn June 20-22.

A group of 25 clinicians, allied care and support professionals, and representatives of HIV/AIDS service organizations from Tallinn, Kohtla-Jarve, Narva, Parnu, and Tartu attended the three-day workshop.

Developed at the request of WHO's Country Office in Estonia — and in close collaboration with Estonia's Ministry of Social Affairs Department of Public Health and the National Institute for Health Development — the training marked an important step toward improving both access to and quality of HIV and AIDS-related care and support in this Baltic nation of 1.3 million inhabitants.

The latest government statistics indicate that Estonia is home to nearly 5,800 people living with HIV, but the actual number is projected to be higher. Similar to most countries in Eastern Europe, Estonia's HIV/AIDS epidemic has

largely been driven by injecting drug use and the commercial sex trade, although in recent years the virus has increasingly spread to young people in particular through unprotected sex.

Nearly half of all new HIV cases reported in 2006 were among people under the age of 25. Women accounted for 36 percent of all new infections that same year, indicating that mother-to-child transmission of the virus is also likely to rise.

Based on case management training courses conducted in Russia and other countries in the region, the Tallinn workshop focused on introducing the participants to the concept of case management, stressing its utility for ensuring that people living with HIV have access to a comprehensive, integrated network of clinical care and social support services.

Case management expert and long-time AIHA consultant Linda Brandt, former executive director of the Rural AIDS Action Network in St. Paul, Minnesota, conducted the training.

During the workshop, a good deal of time was spent familiarizing participants with assessment tools, service plans, release forms, the patient bill of rights, and other key documents commonly used in case management, Brandt explains. They also learned about the 21 core duties of case managers. "Our initial discussions revealed participants currently perform only five of those, which indicates that implementing a case management system for HIV/AIDS care is a very new endeavor for everyone involved," she points out.

"It appears that all of the key stakeholders in Estonia agree there is a need and that they view case management from the appropriate vantage point of increasing the quality of care and improving access to care for those people who are most difficult to serve," Brandt concludes. "The goal is to train the HIV service and healthcare provider communities to effectively coordinate care. This training laid a firm foundation for this to occur in all five cities represented at the workshop."



Interactive discussions and group activities allowed participants to learn what their contemporaries are doing to improve care and support for people living with HIV. At the same time, they were given tools and materials that will assist them as they work to implement case management strategies in their own communities.

## AIHA and ATEC-St. Petersburg Conduct Training Workshop for Medical Faculty from Eastern Europe, Central Asia

*Workshop participants discussed possible ways of integrating updated HIV curricula at their own institutions, using the MAPS experience as a springboard.*

Specialists from the Saint Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies (MAPS) recently conducted a training-of-trainers workshop for 14 medical educators from four Eurasian nations at the AIDS Training and Education Center May 21-25.

Faculty teams from undergraduate and postgraduate medical schools in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Uzbekistan gathered in St. Petersburg to update their knowledge of the latest evidence-based trends in HIV and AIDS-related treatment and care, particularly the provision of anti-

retroviral therapy (ART) for adult and adolescent patients.

Participants also studied adult learning techniques and enhanced their communication and interactive teaching skills during the five-day workshop.

The ART curriculum that served as the basis of the training was developed by AIHA and the Kyiv-based Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia. It has since been certified by MAPS and integrated into the postgraduate medical education systems of St. Peters-

burg and several other Russian regions. Workshop participants discussed possible ways of integrating updated HIV curricula at their own institutions, using the MAPS experience as a springboard.

Through the Knowledge Hub, AIHA procured substantial funding for direct participant costs from WHO/Belarus, WHO/Moldova, WHO/Uzbekistan, and GTZ, thus significantly leveraging donor resources and increasing long-term credibility of the project's results throughout the region.

## Leading by Example, Minister of Health and US Ambassador Seek to Increase Voluntary Blood Donations in Moldova



US Ambassador to Moldova Michael D. Kirby (above left and in the photo below) and Moldovan Minister of Health Ion Ababii were the first to donate at a public blood drive following the conference. Their example prompted 32 conference participants and some 200 private citizens to voluntarily donate blood during the event.



In celebration of World Blood Donor Day, Moldovan Minister of Health Ion Ababii and US Ambassador to Moldova Michael D. Kirby donated blood at a mobile blood drive outside Chisinau's Nicolae Testemițanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy on June 14.

With local media snapping photos and rolling video, the pair set an example that was followed by 32 participants who had just attended a one-day conference conducted by Moldova's Ministry of Health and the National Blood Transfusion Center (NBTC) with support from the American people through USAID's Preventing HIV and Hepatitis B and C Project (PHHP). Another 200 people donated blood later that day at an NBTC blood drive.

Attended by more than 200 representatives of the healthcare community, NGOs, local government agencies, patient associations, and international donor groups, the conference marked the culmination of two weeks of activities and events designed to increase voluntary blood donation in Moldova.

Minister Ababii and Ambassador Kirby kicked off the conference and scientific experts included NBTC Director Larisa Catrinici and Moldova's Chief Specialist on Hematology and Transfusions Ion Corcimaru. Presentations were also made by a specialist from the American Association of Blood Banks, NBTC's quality manager, USAID PHHP chief of party, and AIHA's blood safety team leader.

Access to safe blood and blood products is crucial to any nation's healthcare system and to the welfare of all citizens who need life-saving transfusions and other related services.

Global research has shown that the prevalence of blood-borne infections is lowest among individuals who donate blood voluntarily and for altruistic purposes.

Through Moldova's National Program for Blood Transfusion Safety, voluntary and non-remunerated blood donations have increased from zero percent of all donations in 2004 to 18 percent in 2006. Still more must

be done to further improve the safety of the country's blood supply.

Giving blood is a safe process for donors in Moldova because all related supplies are used only once then disposed of in accordance with universal precautions. Moldova also tests 100 percent of its blood supply for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, and Syphilis. Attracting donors who are at low risk for blood-borne infections is another important element of the country's strategy to ensure the safety of its supply of blood and blood products.

Through the PHHP, USAID is supporting Moldova's efforts to establish a blood safety program in keeping with international quality standards by providing technical assistance and targeted training. To this end, PHHP's blood safety team conducted a donor recruitment seminar June 8-10 that was attended by blood service professionals representing all of Moldova's districts. Topics covered included recruitment techniques and building community partnerships to increase voluntary donations.

## AIHA Partner Harutiun Kushkyan Appointed Minister of Health of Armenia

Harutiun Kushkyan, general director of Yerevan's Erebuni Medical Center and one of AIHA's first partners in the Caucasus, was appointed Minister of Health of Armenia in June 2007.

Kushkyan was a driving force behind AIHA's partnership linking Erebuni with Boston's Beth Israel Hospital. Established in 1993, the partnership focused primarily on improving women's healthcare services, neonatal care, and nursing care and education. In April 1995, UCLA Medical Center

took over as the lead US partner with Beth Israel continuing to provide technical assistance on women's reproductive health.

A strong proponent of the partnership model, many of Kushkyan's priority health system development targets for the next five years — including expanding nursing services and launching a magnet program similar to the one piloted at Erebuni in 2001 through AIHA's Nursing Quality Improvement Initiative — mirror key focus areas of AIHA partner-

ships in Armenia and the rest of the region.

Other priorities include establishing model clinical centers for cancer diagnosis and treatment and primary care and prevention; developing new evidence-based clinical protocols that will be introduced throughout the country; and strengthening emergency medical services by upgrading facilities and improving training programs for first-responders and urgent care professionals.



Harutiun Kushkyan, MD, PhD.

## Knowledge Hub, ATEC-St. Petersburg Spearhead Efforts to Build HIV/AIDS Treatment and Care Capacity in Belarus

AIHA, the Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia, and the AIDS Training and Education Center (ATEC) in St. Petersburg are working together to train healthcare professionals, social workers, and lay counselors in Belarus how to provide comprehensive treatment, care, and support services to people living with HIV or AIDS.

To date, five training courses have been conducted in Belarus by Knowledge Hub experts thanks to a USAID grant to WHO-Europe. Two courses, Initiation of ART for Adults in Correctional Settings and Initiation of ART for Adults, were conducted in late 2006. Clinical mentoring courses were conducted in Minsk and Gomel in January, and an Advanced Adult ART and Opportunistic Infections Management course was held in Minsk April 23-27.

Most recently, a sixth training was conducted on Palliative Care for People Living with HIV/AIDS at ATEC-St. Petersburg. This workshop was attended by 18 clinicians, social work volunteers, and HIV activists. Participants

represented the Belorussian cities of Gomel, Minsk, Pinsk, Svetlogorsk, and Zhlobin.

The training gave an overview of palliative care and explored topics such as HIV stigma and discrimination, psycho-social support for people living with HIV, patient counseling, spiritual care, home-based care, and effective communication. Other subjects covered were pain and symptom management, palliative care for children, bereavement counseling, and the importance of the multidisciplinary team approach to HIV/AIDS care.

"Virtually everyone in the group recognized the value of the team approach to care and seemed to listen openly to the input of participants from different professions," says palliative care educator Marcia Levetown, who served as one of the trainers.

Through a combination of lectures, small group discussions, and practical exercises, faculty were able to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of participants and tailor sessions accordingly.

Pain assessment — including how to determine both type and severity of a patient's suffering — was one area that most participants struggled with, according to Levetown. As a result, she spent additional time explaining pain assessment tools and describing the correlation between specific types of pain and associated treatments prior to embarking on the clinical portion of the training course.

"The site visits are critically important because they give participants an opportunity to interact directly with patients and put what they have learned into practice," Levetown explains.

One participant, a member of an NGO for people living with HIV, made a case for ongoing training, saying, "The classroom sessions and site visits gave me a more complete understanding of palliative care, as well as just how complicated HIV care is. I hope with more trainings, peer counselors can become an important and respected part of HIV/AIDS care teams in Belarus."



A group of social workers discuss effective ways to promote patient adherence during an Advanced ART for Adults training conducted in Minsk last April.



Participants and trainers work together during the palliative care training held May 21-25 at ATEC- St. Petersburg.

## Philanthropist Daniel E. Meehan Honored for Contributions to Georgia's Primary Healthcare Reform Efforts



Laurie Lukaszewicz, Daniel E. Meehan, Dr. Ketevan Loria, and Dr. Shulva Bratchuli pose for a photo following the award ceremony in Milwaukee June 22.

The Republic of Georgia presented Daniel E. Meehan with the Order of Honor in recognition of his contributions to primary healthcare reform efforts in the Caucasus nation of 4.6 million.

As president of the Meehan Family Foundation, Mr. Meehan supported the work of AIHA's Mtskheta-Mtianeti/Milwaukee partnership, donating funds to build the Mtskheta District Family Medicine Clinic and Regional Training Center.

Former US Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G.

Thompson and Mtskheta partner Ketevan Loria presented the award in Milwaukee June 22.

Opened in October 2003, the Family Medicine Clinic provides a broad range of primary care, dental, and specialty services, including diagnosis and treatment of TB, cancer, blood disorders, and mental and behavioral conditions. The clinic also piloted a community-based hypertension control program that is slated for national dissemination.

The Regional Training Center provides graduate-level training,

retraining, and continuing education courses in family medicine for physicians and nurses throughout Georgia. Classroom sessions are reinforced with skills-based practical training in the clinic.

The Regional Training Center is accredited by Georgia's Ministry of Labor, Health, and Social Affairs, and recognized by the Georgian National Postgraduate Medical Academy, the World Bank, Europe Aid, and other international donor agencies.

## LRC Distance Learning Courses Teach Healthcare Professionals About Evidence-based Medical Practices



Three course participants from Tashkent Medical Academy display the certificates they were awarded for completing the distance learning class on evidence-based clinical practice.

In 2004, AIHA introduced an e-mail-based distance learning course to help both current and graduated partners — along with any other healthcare professionals who are interested in the topic — learn more about evidence-based medicine. Since then, staff have conducted a total of seven courses, four in Russian and three in English.

Titled "Introduction to Evidence-based Practice," these courses have attracted more than 260 healthcare professionals from 12 countries in Eastern Europe and five in Africa. Of that number, 55 participants have submitted completed e-portfolios with all course activities.

"The course is designed to introduce participants to the basics of evidence-based practice in healthcare," says AIHA Information and Medical Resources Coordinator Irina Ibraghimova.

Through the online course, healthcare providers, medical librarians, and other allied professionals learn the principles of evidence-based medicine.

Participants are also familiarized with key tools and resources that will help them to introduce evidence-based medicine into their own daily practice, explains Ibraghimova, who developed the course and related materials based on a format and delivery system created by Andrew Booth at the University of Sheffield's School of Health and Related Research.

Practice Standard Reviews are one way to integrate evidence-based medicine into clinical care, Ibraghimova says. The course provides step-by-step guidance through the process of examining a current medical protocol to determine if the practice not only ensures the best possible patient outcomes, but also make sense from a cost perspective.

Participants learn how to formulate answerable clinical questions and identify the best sources of evidence for each type of question, as well as a corresponding search strategy. They also learn how to critically appraise resources and identify methods that will best help them introduce new, evidence-based

practices at their institution. The course also allows participants to discuss clinical concerns with colleagues from other countries.

Promoting evidence-based clinical practices has long been a key component of AIHA's strategy to improve patient outcomes in partner communities around the globe. Evidence-based medicine supports both immediate and long-term improvements in care at individual, institutional, and systemic levels. It also helps ensure the best possible patient outcomes and the most rational use of medications and other resources.

Through AIHA's network of some 150 Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia, more than 70,000 healthcare practitioners working at partner institutions have access to information and communications technologies that put a wealth of clinical research at their fingertips. Another 30,000 researchers, students, clinicians, and patients use the LRCs' services or attend classes conducted by information coordinators and staff.

## St. Petersburg Seminar Focuses on Educating Primary Care Providers About HIV, Increasing Tolerance for PLWH

Through the HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care, and Support (TCS) Project in Russia, AIHA conducted a training seminar designed to provide primary care practitioners in St. Petersburg with an overview of HIV epidemiology and treatment while at the same time helping build tolerance for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Held April 11-13, the three-day event brought together 21 general practitioners and nurses who work at polyclinics in St. Petersburg's Frunzensky District. It was the first in a series of district-based training events

planned and was facilitated by a team of three instructors — a physician, a psychologist, and a nurse — who were trained during the first phase of the TCS Project.

These HIV education and tolerance building seminars have three main goals: to increase practitioner knowledge about HIV, including the basics of treatment and prevention; to strengthen HIV-related treatment and care skills among infectious disease specialists, nurses, and other providers of primary care; and to help caregivers under-

stand their own possible fears, prejudices, and negative attitudes related to HIV and people living with the virus.

Specific topics covered by the training include effective ways of communicating with patients, how to diagnose and treat common opportunistic infections, how to recognize substance abuse and addiction problems, and the basics of infection control and prevention.

Additional seminars are planned for the fall in Orenburg and St. Petersburg.



During sessions on communicating with patients, participants learn how to broach sensitive subjects, including condom use.

## Orenburg/New York City Partners Conduct HIV-TB Clinical Course in Orenburg

AIHA and its partnership linking the Orenburg Oblast AIDS Center in Russia with Elmhurst Hospital Center in New York City conducted a regional training on HIV and Tuberculosis co-infection June 25-29 at the Orenburg Oblast TB Dispensary.

Some 25 HIV and TB specialists from Orenburg, Gai, Orsk, and Novotroitsk attended the event, which focused on the clinical aspects of managing patients infected with both HIV and TB. This was the first training event in the region to bring together clinicians from both disciplines.

US partner George Alonso, head of Mount Sinai School of Medicine's Infection Control Department, served as faculty for the course along with specialists from the Orenburg Oblast TB Dispensary, Orenburg Oblast Medical Academy, and Botkin Hospital in St. Petersburg.

Two other Elmhurst partners — Clinical Pharmacologist Ranja

Kutval and Adherence Counselor Carol Cardenas — were in Orenburg at the time of the workshop and facilitated a session on treatment adherence.

The workshop's format included both scientific lectures and clinical training at the TB Dispensary's 60-bed HIV-TB unit.

Participants had the opportunity to conduct clinical examinations of patients under the supervision of US and Russian faculty and later share their findings with others during interactive case study discussions.

Key challenges to providing care for individuals co-infected with HIV and TB were discussed during the event. Lack of coordination at both regional and federal levels, along with discrepancies in referral recommendations and record-keeping, were cited by participants and trainers alike.

Another barrier described by Russian specialists is the limited

possibility to test patients of TB clinics for HIV onsite. Instead, patients are shuffled from one specialty care facility to another and many are lost in the process.

Lack of rapid testing supplies for both HIV and TB also hamper effective treatment. TB specialists are themselves at risk of infection because they currently use surgical masks for routine work with patients rather than the internationally recommended respirators that offer more protection.



TB and HIV specialists from Orenburg Oblast attend a lecture during the June training.



## 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](http://www.aiha.com)

## St. Petersburg/New Haven Partners Conduct Exchange, Focus on Scaling Up Treatment and Caregiver Training

AIHA partners at Yale University School of Medicine traveled to Russia May 15-26 to review the progress made through their twinning alliance with colleagues at the St. Petersburg AIDS Control Center and to chart a course for future efforts to improve and expand HIV-related care and support services.

US partners provided onsite mentoring for their counterparts, shadowing St. Petersburg physicians as they consulted with patients and conducted physical exams in both inpatient and ambulatory settings at the AIDS Center and Botkin Hospital. More than 30 patients were examined by the partners, offering a varied cross section by which to assess improvements as well as areas for expanded training.

The US partners also presented AIHA and AIDS Center staff with the mentor's assessment tool used to evaluate the clinical skills of physicians and nurses newly trained in the provision of antiretroviral therapy (ART) at Yale University School of Medicine.

Implementation of a similar mentoring program for newly trained infectious disease specialists in St. Petersburg was discussed, with both the AIDS Center and Botkin Hospital slated to serve as clinical sites.

Partners also discussed the possibility of initiating an ART adherence program at the AIDS Center. Yale partners provided extensive information on the roles of various adherence team members, along with models for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of such a program. As a result, partners decided to collaborate on the development of a unified approach to designing an ART adherence program for use throughout St. Petersburg.

To that end, partners suggested creating a working group to develop local guidelines that will include descriptions of implementation strategies and effectiveness assessments.

US partners also conducted clinical training on topics such as

working with injecting drug users and palliative care for people living with HIV or AIDS for practicing nurses.

In a related session conducted at the request of faculty at the Pavlov Medical Academy, one Yale partner provided a lecture on the structure of nursing schools in the United States and the role of nurses in the public health system. Both faculty and nursing school students attended.

Future exchanges will focus on scaling up ART and other HIV care and support services at the district level through practitioner training and other capacity building activities.

**During the recent exchange, Yale partners shared some of the strategies they use to improve the adherence of patients undergoing antiretroviral therapy.**

