



AIHA Partners at Elmhurst Hospital Center Receive President's Volunteer Service Award for Work in Russia

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Members of AIHA's USAID-funded Orenburg/New York City partnership received the President's Volunteer Service Award in recognition of their exemplary service and dedication to improving the quality and scope of HIV/AIDS-related treatment, care, and support in the Russian Federation.

USAID Assistant Administrator Douglas Menarchik presented 27 individual awards, as well as an institutional award for Elmhurst Hospital Center, during a ceremony held in conjunction with the hospital's 50th anniversary celebration on March 15 in New York City.

AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith was also on hand to award certificates of appreciation to more than 20 other healthcare professionals who have contributed significantly to the success of the partnership.

Established in July 2004, the Orenburg/New York City partnership is one of four AIHA twinning alliances supported by USAID's HIV/AIDS Treatment, Care, and

Support Initiative in Russia. The partnership links the Orenburg Oblast AIDS Center with Elmhurst Hospital Center and other nearby organizations involved in the provision of HIV/AIDS care, including Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, the New York City Department of Health's HIV Surveillance Unit and AIDS Institute, and the AIDS Center of Queens County.

According to Menarchik, the Orenburg/New York City partnership and other similar health programs play an important role in USAID's assistance strategy for Europe and Eurasia, particularly in Russia where better health is critical to the nation's economic, political, and social security.

"Russia has one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world and USAID is proud of the work that has been done together with Elmhurst and its affiliates to improve the lives of so many in [that country]," he said. "Foreign assistance through this kind of specialized technical assistance and sharing can be a strong formula for peace and stability around the world."

Calling the partnership an "outstanding example of the long history of collaborative health efforts with Russia that is highlighted in this year's celebration of the 200th anniversary of US-Russia relations," Menarchik presented gold awards — given in recognition of 500 or more volunteer hours— to Judith Brenner, Joseph Masci, Jacqueline Stith, and Elmhurst Hospital Center. Vasanthi Arumagum, Neil Landreville, and Marilyn Fabbri received silver awards, which are given to people who volunteer between 250-499 hours. Bronze awards

recognizing those who have volunteered between 175-249 hours were given to Alexa Contraras, Judith Casey, Carol Cardenas-Tinoco, Alan Blalock, Amar Ashraf, George Alonso, Juan Carolos Tobon, Maurice Policar, Andrea Odwin-Clarke, Susan Novales, Arline McDonald, Ranjana Kutwal-Sharma, Sylvia Jaegar, Kathleen Higgins, Karina Gritsenko, Zoraya Gil, Pamela Gibbons, Judith Garcia, Elizabeth Franquie, Phillip Rabito, and Carlos Salama.

"Developing strong relationships with Russia through this type of activity is in our own national interest," Menarchik told the group. "Through health partnerships, [colleagues] from the United States and from the region work together as peers to identify health needs, develop realistic strategies for meeting those needs, and implement programs to attain their goals," he said, noting such an approach instills a strong sense of ownership and establishes relationships that endure long after USAID funding ends.

The Orenburg/Elmhurst partners have worked together to develop an integrated model of HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment, and social support that can be replicated throughout Russia. Some of their key accomplishments include developing a needs assessment tool to organize HIV care and adapting a case management system and new patient intake protocols from effective models they saw at work in the United States.



Partners from Elmhurst Hospital Center gather with USAID Assistant Administrator Douglas Menarchik (center) and AIHA Executive Director James P. Smith (front left) following the presentation of the awards.





AIHA, PATH Launch New Internet Resource on Tuberculosis

AIHA has joined forces with the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) to create the EurasiaHealth TB Knowledge Network (www.eurasiahealth.org/tb), a clearinghouse of English- and Russian-language TB guidelines and other resources designed specifically for healthcare professionals in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Funded by USAID, EurasiaHealth TB Knowledge Network provides evidence-based clinical research and guidelines along with various networking and learning opportunities geared toward program managers, doctors, nurses,

community health workers and fieldshers, NGOs, policymakers, TB patients, and others who are interested in tuberculosis. The site houses hundreds of documents and resources that have been translated into Russian and offers information on regional TB projects, funding opportunities, and conferences. It also features discussion forums that link scientists, community activists, government officials, and other experts working on TB-related projects in the region.

While the TB Knowledge Network addresses all aspects of TB care, treatment, and control, a particular focus lies in several

specialty topic areas — such as advocacy, communication, and social mobilization (ACSM); DOTS expansion; DOTS-Plus and MDR-TB; laboratory; TB drugs; TB diagnostics; TB vaccines; and TB/HIV co-infection — that represent common, critical issues throughout the region. Through research and collaboration, the EurasiaHealth TB team is constantly working to develop and catalog new resources in each of these areas.

The EurasiaHealth TB Knowledge Network is part of the EurasiaHealth Knowledge Network, which was established by AIHA in 2001.

AIHA, RRC, and other partners are collaborating to improve the quality of reproductive health services provided to inmates...

Improving Women’s Reproductive Health in Russian Prisons

AIHA and the Red Cross National Society of the Russian Federation (RRC) are working with governmental and nongovernmental healthcare providers to improve the quality of reproductive health services for women in two Irkutsk Oblast penal colonies in Eastern Siberia. Located in Bozoi, both facilities house a total of 1,804 women.

RRC, which has considerable experience in the provision of social support services for incarcerated populations, has an agreement with Russia’s Federal

Department of Corrections to provide educational programs focused on the prevention of HIV and STIs in the country’s prisons.

AIHA, RRC, and other partners are collaborating to improve the quality of reproductive health services provided to inmates by training and mentoring medical and non-medical personnel who work in both correctional settings and local institutions that provide specialized care to prisoners. Other priorities include educating inmates about reproductive health issues, improving diagnos-

tic and treatment capacity, and developing transition plans for women prior to release.

Albany Medical Center’s AIDS Program (AMCAP) and its Center of Excellence in HIV Correctional Health Care will provide technical assistance for the project. AIHA and AMCAP have already developed several courses on the provision of ART and management of opportunistic infections for incarcerated populations and have conducted four courses in Belarus and Ukraine.

ATEC-St. Petersburg Launches ART Training Project

The AIDS Training and Education Center (ATEC) in St. Petersburg began conducting “training of trainers” courses on initiation of ART in adults and adolescents last November as part of a joint project of AIHA and the St. Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies.

Funded by the Russian Healthcare Foundation through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria’s round-four grants,

this project is designed to integrate HIV/AIDS curricula into graduate and postgraduate education programs in target regions throughout Russia.

Faculty at regional schools of medical education are being trained in basic ART, adult learning, and interactive teaching skills during phase one of the cascading project. Courses have already been conducted in Chelyabinsk, Ekaterinburg, Irkutsk,

Perm, Ufa, and Ulyanovsk and more will be held in Barnaul, Kemerovo, Krasnodar, Rostov, Saratov, and Volgograd in the coming months. To date, 40 faculty were trained during the project’s first phase.

In turn, these master trainers have initiated scale-up of the project by training 165 infectious diseases specialists and other healthcare professionals.



Partners Conduct Health Fair in Chokhatauri, Georgia

More than 120 people from the Georgian city of Chokhatauri and its surrounding areas attended a Community Health Fair hosted at the local polyclinic by AIHA's Guria/La Crosse partners on December 20.

With non-communicable diseases accounting for up to 85 percent of all deaths in Eastern Europe, primary care interventions that support patient education and awareness are more important than ever before.

Health fairs are part of a broad strategy to improve health status in Georgia and other countries in the region being implemented

with USAID funding. Other related communication and outreach activities include placing health education stories in local mass media, school-based health education classes, and educational activities developed and implemented by family medicine practitioners.

Like most partnership health fairs, the Chokhatauri event helped raise public awareness of common ailments and lifestyle choices that can improve overall wellness. In addition to providing information about the basics of First Aid and CPR, reproductive health, tuberculosis, child health and development, and malaria,

partners also conducted screenings for diabetes and high blood pressure and performed routine physical exams.

Established in April 2004, the Guria/La Crosse partnership links the Guria Regional Health Care Department with World Services of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Since then, partners have worked together to strengthen existing primary care services in Georgia's Guria region and implement innovative new community-based disease prevention and health promotion programs.

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Strengthening Primary Care in Turkmenistan

In 1999, AIHA established a partnership linking the Turkmen Ministry of Health and Medical Industry and Health House No. 1 in Ashgabat with the University of North Dakota, the North Dakota State Health Department, and a consortium of other healthcare provider organizations.

The Ashgabat/North Dakota partnership opened a Family Medicine Training Center at the Health House in May 2001. Since then, nearly all primary care professionals and medical school faculty in the capital have undergone training at the center and new education topics are constantly being added to the program.

The Family Medicine Training Center has six instructors, including three nurses. All of them were trained in North Dakota and received on-going instruction at numerous family medicine workshops and conferences conducted by AIHA. Primarily, the center works with former general practitioners and pediatricians who, after training, return to their medical institutions ready to provide a broad range of healthcare services to people of all backgrounds.

"Our center has the latest equipment, all kinds of mannequins, and visual training aids that help us show our students the changes that occur in the body with different diseases and how to detect them during clinical examinations," says Aina Klychdurdyeva, director of the center. "Development of practical skills is the most important aspect of training for healthcare professionals. All of our courses devote 70 percent of training time to the acquisition of hands-on clinical skills, which is a unique approach in Turkmenistan."

The standard training course at the center lasts four weeks and one-week training modules cover otolaryngology, ophthalmology, cardiovascular diseases, and women's and children's health, Klychdurdyeva explains, noting that the facility has been equipped with special classrooms for each of these topic areas. She is quick to point out that the instructional approach is very rigorous — and very effective. "On average, our students experience a 30 percent increase in their knowledge by the end of the course, but that is not the end of our contact with them.

We're equipped with computers, Internet access, and many audio-visual aids, so they routinely come back to us for any medical information they might need. Other healthcare institutions in our country don't have this capacity," Klychdurdyeva says.

Another unique aspect of the center is its team approach to care. The concept — which trains physician-nurse teams who work together to provide care — was new to the region and initially met with resistance. It didn't take long, though, for everyone involved to recognize the value of this methodology and start to adopt it into their systems. Now doctors and nurses study the same topics together in the same groups.

Some 1,000 medical school instructors and healthcare professionals from Ashgabat have earned diplomas from the center. Among them is a team of instructors for a second Family Medicine Training Center, which — thanks to USAID and AIHA support — opened in December 2005 at the Scientific Center of Physiology to provide training to healthcare practitioners from rural areas spanning Turkmenistan.



Patient education and outreach, such as this class for expectant mothers, plays a key role in the provision of quality primary care.



An instructor at the Scientific Center of Physiology Family Medicine Training Center demonstrates birthing techniques to a group of practitioners from Turkmenistan's outlying regions.

Primary Care Evaluation Panel Gives AIHA Partnerships High Marks for Work in Eastern Europe and Central Asia



Community-based patient education and outreach programs like this health fair in Dubna, Russia, played an important role in getting people to take greater responsibility for their own wellness.



Partnership activities stressed the use of evidence-based clinical practices as a way to improve outcomes and ensure the most rational use of limited resources.

A recent evaluation of AIHA's primary healthcare partnerships in Eastern Europe and Central Asia gives the program high marks for ushering in significant system-wide changes resulting in measurable improvements in the delivery of high-quality primary prevention and treatment services.

Commissioned by USAID and conducted by Terra P Group, Inc. between August and December 2006, the evaluation focused on the achievements of 28 USAID-funded partnerships established in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine over an 8-year period spanning 1998-2006. Collectively, the patient population with steady access to partnership-supported primary care services is estimated at 1.2-1.5 million people.

Key accomplishments cited in the 164-page report issued earlier this year reflect impressive changes at both the provider and end user levels.

On the provider side, the skills-based clinical training and peer-to-peer support that are the hallmarks of AIHA's partnerships led to marked improvements in both access to and quality of

care, as well as more rational use of healthcare services — particularly higher rates of preventive care such as annual physicals, gynecological exams, well baby check ups, and early screening for cancer and chronic diseases.

Because the work of these partnerships was driven by the needs of each community, many positive changes took place at the patient level as well. Partner education and outreach efforts resulted in increased demand for primary care services, more patient involvement in the healthcare decision-making process, and greater individual responsibility for personal health and wellbeing.

According to the report, tangible evidence — both quantitative and qualitative — of health and social sector gains was apparent in the overall reductions of mortality and morbidity in partnership communities throughout the region. Specific areas of improvement that contributed to these gains include cervical and breast cancer, hypertension, neonatal and perinatal conditions, occupational injuries, dental caries, sexually transmitted infections, intestinal parasites, nosocomial infections, drug and tobacco use, and excessive or inappropriate use of antibiotics.

AIHA's Primary Healthcare Partnership Program "has increased the capacity of primary care providers to address the problems and concerns of an estimated four out of five patients who come to see a primary care doctor."

While the partnerships had a positive impact at three main levels — individual, institutional, and community-wide — they were also a highly effective vehicle for introducing systemic changes that strengthened care delivery and facility management, the evaluators reported.

A key reason for this success is the fact that partnerships worked with the existing system rather than against it, they concluded, stating: "The infusion of new content into established provider networks [reduced] the collateral burden of structural change and moderated political and professional tensions [in the] culturally sensitive, effective management of a major systemic innovation in the healthcare sectors of 11 countries."

Regional Knowledge Hub Launches ART Training in Belarus



The Regional Knowledge Hub has trained more than 2,500 HIV/AIDS care providers in Eurasia since 2003.

The Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia is collaborating with WHO-Europe to train clinicians and allied medical professionals from Belarus in all aspects of HIV/AIDS care, including basic and advanced ART, palliative care, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

Supported by a USAID grant to WHO-Europe, this project is helping Belarus implement and scale up a national HIV/AIDS

prevention, care, and treatment program.

Two courses — Introduction to ART and Introduction to ART in Correctional Settings — were conducted by Knowledge Hub faculty in Minsk last November and December. An onsite mentoring course was also conducted at that time.

An Advanced ART course will take place in April and two more courses will be held in early

summer: one on palliative care for patients with HIV or AIDS and another specially designed 5-day faculty development workshop for clinical professionals and educators from the Belarus Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education.

This second workshop, which will be opened up to faculty from similar institutions in the region, will focus on revision of existing HIV/AIDS curricula and training in adult learning methodologies.



The American International Health Alliance

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

American International Health Alliance

1225 Eye Street, NW
Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005 USA

Phone: 202.789.1136
Fax: 202.789.1277
www.aiha.com

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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

Expanding Palliative Care Services for PLWHA in Russia

Palliative care services are a common provision of healthcare in much of the West, but remain largely unavailable to patients in many other parts of the world.

Although it should be offered throughout the course of a chronic or life-threatening illness to treat, prevent, relieve, or reduce symptoms without affecting a cure, palliative care is not intended to replace disease-fighting interventions such as chemotherapy for cancer or ARV medications for HIV. Instead, it should provide comfort and support to individuals who are living with long-term illness. Palliative care also plays close attention to the medical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs of patients and their families.

In Russia and other Eurasian countries, however, healthcare workers often lack the resources and training needed to provide palliative care. In addition, their view of healthcare is more traditional and narrower in scope.

"Palliative care — particularly as it relates to HIV/AIDS patients —

has not yet been developed in Russia," admits Vasily I. Shakhgildyan, senior scientific worker at the Federal AIDS Center in Moscow. Although a handful of pilot sites do have special units for the provision of palliative care to AIDS patients, other regions do not yet have this capacity, he explains.

Russia faces many obstacles to implementing HIV/AIDS-related palliative care services, including lack of training opportunities for symptomatic pain management, staffing regulations at clinics and AIDS Centers, and controversy surrounding the use of narcotic analgesics for drug users, according to Shakhgildyan. "One of the main challenges we face, though, is building human resource capacity," he says.

AIHA has been working to change that through a series of training courses targeting physicians, nurses, and other clinical care providers, as well as members of faith-based organizations and other groups that offer care and support to people living with, or affected by, HIV and AIDS.

Elena Rydalevskaya, a medical doctor and coordinator of drug abuse and AIDS programs at Christian Interfaith Deacon Council in St. Petersburg, attended an AIHA-sponsored workshop in 2006. "The presentations and subsequent discussions with expert faculty were really inspiring," she says, noting that she learned a lot about the relationship between palliative care providers and their patients.

"Palliative care is much broader than what we currently have in place," Rydalevskaya says, stressing the importance of the spiritual, social, and psychological aspects of caring for people with a chronic, life-threatening disease — particularly HIV/AIDS, which is surrounded by so much discrimination.

"Only a handful of NGOs are filling this need and mindsets are slow to change," she says. "Still, workshops like this make it seem possible that our healthcare system can be humanized despite HIV-related fear and stigma."



Course instructors Father Victor Potapov, a Russian Orthodox priest living in Maryland, and Mary Callaway, director of OSI's International Palliative Care Initiative, during a training in St. Petersburg.



Participants at a palliative care workshop in St. Petersburg discuss case studies during a group exercise.