

## Abt Seminar Explores Quality Improvement and Accreditation

*By Stefanie Condie*

NIS and US health care leaders addressed quality improvement and accreditation during a two-day workshop sponsored by Abt Associates, a USAID-funded organization working on health management reform in the NIS. The workshop focused on new payment methods, measuring and reporting quality, accreditation of health care organizations, and information systems.

Panelists explained that contracts between purchasers and providers of health services can facilitate health reform by making the responsibilities of both parties more explicit. Participants also talked about methods for measuring and reporting various dimensions of clinical quality and patient satisfaction to the public, to patients and to purchasers of health care.

Accreditation experts noted that although health care leaders may have other objectives--improving efficiency, reducing costs, strengthening the public's confidence in the health care system, improving management of the organization, or expediting reimbursement--the ultimate goal of accreditation is improving patient care. Traditional evaluation methods focus on an organization's capacity to provide care, but do not measure performance directly. By contrast, newer outcomes-based evaluation systems use indicators to look at past performance and measure how effectively an organization has actually delivered care.

Regardless of the type of evaluation system chosen, it must be an independent, objective process; be highly credible and unbiased; represent the broadest possible consensus; and be used to encourage improvement, according to the panelists. Collaboration with government officials in developing standards increases the sustainability of the accreditation program, panelists said.

The incorporation of continuous quality improvement (CQI) and total quality management (TQM) concepts into accreditation standards can promote patient-centered care, foster good organizational leadership, improve the design of delivery processes and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of care delivery. Data collected by many health care organizations demonstrate that compliance with accreditation standards--if they are based on sound management principles--can improve quality while lowering costs, panelists noted.

Participants acknowledged the need for national accreditation systems in the NIS, because accreditation standards are currently being implemented only at the oblast level. Many participants felt that oblast-level accreditation causes confusion, compromises the value of the accreditation process, and makes it difficult to compare data across oblasts.

Participants said they were also concerned that many hospitals and polyclinics lack the resources to prepare for accreditation or to make even small improvements in care delivery. These constraints present an obstacle to the implementation of a universal accreditation system. Many participants agreed, however, that the adoption of initial standards with minimal requirements would provide incentives for gradual improvements in patient care.

### **Russian Health Leadership Awards**

Three AIHA partners were among the Russian health care leaders recognized for their significant contributions in the field of health management during the final banquet at AIHA's St. Petersburg conference. Igor N. Denisov, MD, PhD, president of the Russian International Association of Educational Programs in Health Administration, presented the principal innovators in health management award to Yakov Nakatis, president of Sokolov Medical

Center in St. Petersburg. In the category of ambulatory care organizations, the principal award went to Olga Tarasova, chief physician at Bolshaya Volga Hospital in Dubna, and Sergei Novikov, chief physician at City Hospital No. 2 in Vladivostok, was recognized in the honorable mention category.

Other principal award winners included Mikhail Ukhanov, chief doctor of Pyatkaranta Central Regional Hospital in the Republic of Karelia, for hospitals; Galina Perfiljeva, dean of nursing education at Sechenov Medical Academy in Moscow, for health administration education; Alla Ivaninskaya, director general of ASOPO-Life HIC and chair of the Novosibirsk Oblast HIC Association, for insurance organizations; and Natalya Kuznetsova, chair of Moscow Oncological Patient Care, for health administration educators.