

Tours Showcase Zagreb Partner Hospitals

Conference participants toured Zagreb's three partner hospitals: Srebrnjak Children's and Adolescents' Hospital for Respiratory Diseases, Dr. Fran Mihaljevic University Hospital for Infectious Diseases, and Sveti Duh Hospital.

At Children's and Adolescent's Hospital, stuffed elephants and pigs perch on the X-ray machine, and clowns and toy dogs festoon the blood gas analyzer. Signs throughout the hospital advise that "It's healthy to quit smoking." The 100-bed facility is the only one in Croatia that specializes in the treatment of children's lung diseases and allergies. Through the partnership, the hospital has developed a wide range of pamphlets on asthma and an extensive patient and parent education program, which has resulted in fewer hospitalizations.

Tuberculosis rates, which rose slightly during the war as Zagreb absorbed an influx of refugees, have inched downward, said Ivka Zoriic-Letoja, MD, a pulmonologist at the hospital. Today, Zagreb's rate is 40 TB cases per 100,000 residents; 1993 rates were 48 per 100,000. "I think we have a cultural awareness of this disease," she said. "We now have almost the whole population immunized."

Founded over 100 years ago when cholera was sweeping through the populace of Eastern Europe, the University Hospital for Infectious Diseases has evolved into a leading regional hospital in its specialty. The 340-bed facility--a Mediterranean-style compound surrounded by verdant gardens and stately magnolia trees--has 11 wards, including pediatric and adult intensive care units, and an AIDS ward. Since the mid-1980's, 117 AIDS patients have been treated at the facility. Patients are most often admitted with central nervous system infections, such as meningitis, but cases of pertussis, tuberculosis and gangrene crop up as well.

A World Bank loan recently helped secure state-of-the-art ventilators and monitors for the pediatric ICU. "Our reputation is such that when we send patients out for surgery, they are sent right back to us," said Bruno Brsic, MD, PhD, an intensive care specialist at the hospital. "This is good for us because our physicians develop skills that other intensive care specialists don't know."

And Sveti Duh is a 605-bed facility offering a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services, including emergency medicine and rehabilitation. Partnership efforts at the hospital include work with renal disease, micro-invasive surgery, and obstetrics and gynecology. Doctors at the hospital are involved with ground-breaking research to detect breast, ovarian and endometrial cancers through the use of color Doppler ultrasound. For information on the hospital's achievements in lowering antibiotic costs and in creating collaborative practice between doctors and nurses, see page 10.