

Semipalatinsk Computer Club Brings Hospitals into the Information Age

Telnet. Download. E-mail. These are all familiar terms to medical students in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan, who communicate regularly with students in Houston, Texas, thanks to electronic mail services provided by AIHA.

"We correspond with students at Baylor College of Medicine via e-mail on a daily basis," said first-year medical student Anara Zhumadilova, who created a computer club with six medical students at the Semipalatinsk Medical Institute recently. Convening weekly meetings at the Oncological Dispensary, the club was created to provide a forum for practical English-language training, links with the wider medical community, and greater research capabilities for medical students in Semipalatinsk.

Sergei Chubakov, partnership information coordinator for Oblast Clinical Hospital, regularly provides club members with updates on e-mail technology and information resources that are accessible on the World Wide Web, including updates to AIHA's site. Club members also send diagnostic images to student colleagues in Houston and share opinions on the outcomes of analyzing these images, explained club member Evgeniya Zazechneva. Similarly, members of the cancer registry team at the Inter-Oblast Oncology Dispensary collaborate with Houston partners and regularly share information on diagnosis, treatment techniques and outcomes.

Student interest in the computer club prompted hospital-wide training of health care personnel on computer use. Recently, health care administrators at Emergency Hospital created a software program to record patient drug history information. The computer program, "Pharmacologia," replaces traditional record keeping, which was both "inefficient and time-consuming," according to pharmacy department administrator and information coordinator Saule Ibraeva.

The new program stores information on a centralized database which monitors patient intake and drug inventory for the hospital's 300 drugs. "Losses in pharmaceuticals have declined due to our new monitoring system," said Ibraeva. The program also reduces the amount of time spent by nurses in recording medication records, noted Emergency Hospital Head Physician Kaynolla Musin.

As the partnership continues, Musin hopes to take further advantage of available computer tools to promote greater community involvement and sharing of information. "Computers are an excellent way to interface with the greater Semipalatinsk community," Musin said. - *Joanne Neuber*