

## A Note from the Executive Director

*By James P. Smith*

In October, nearly 400 partners, Health Ministry officials and other health care professionals from the NIS and US convened in Des Moines, Iowa for the Fourth Partnership Conference for the NIS. For three days participants learned about the progress partners are making and new ideas for women's health, information technology and management.

But in a step forward from other conferences, when partners left Des Moines they were empowered to further their consultations and learning with partners across the NIS and US via teleconferences and the Internet. Within a month of the conference, partners sponsored three teleconferences: two linked nurses from hospitals in the Moscow region with their colleagues in the United States, and the other brought together 40 doctors and nurses from Emergency Scientific Medical Center in Yerevan with Boston University Medical Center in Massachusetts to discuss infection control. Doctors in St. Petersburg, Russia are sharing medical images (similar to the one on the cover of this issue) with their partners in Atlanta, Georgia to consult about diagnoses and treatment options.

The new capacity to share work with other health care practitioners around the world is just as significant. During the conference, hospital information coordinators created more than 25 World Wide Web pages, participants attended seminars in the basics of Internet research and new resources for accessing medical information, and partners presented success stories about connecting via computer with other physicians thousands of miles away to answer clinical questions. From the recently opened National Information Learning Center in Tbilisi to a demonstration of remote medical imaging at Iowa Methodist Hospital during the conference, articles in this issue of CommonHealth look at the potential for health care information technology to revolutionize medicine.

In addition to comprehensive coverage of technology and the NIS conference, this issue of CommonHealth includes articles on an array of CEE partnership activities, including the White House ceremony formalizing the Tuzla, Bosnia-Buffalo, New York partnership and post-traumatic stress disorder in Croatia. The issue also highlights the graduation of the Tallinn, Estonia-Washington, DC partnership. The strides in nursing, EMS, women's health, health management and family medicine made by this partnership offer great inspiration for the continuing work of all AIHA partnerships.