

BUILDING CAPACITY TO CARE

Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia



Program Overview: May 2008



COMBATING HIV/AIDS IN EURASIA

The global HIV/AIDS pandemic was already in its second decade by the time it started to make real inroads in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Beginning in the mid-1990s, though, the virus struck there with a vengeance. Some communities experienced infection rates that increased by 200 percent or more over the course of a few years and the region became home to one of the fastest growing rates of new HIV infections in the world.

Providing treatment and support to people living with HIV is a difficult and complex undertaking even in the best of circumstances. For nations in transition, however, it poses a potentially crushing burden. Health systems must adapt virtually overnight to build the human and institutional capacity needed to meet the demands of the virus.

Although HIV/AIDS-related clinical care is complicated and highly specialized, the urgency of the region's skyrocketing epidemic has drastically reduced the timeframe in which care providers must learn new concepts and practical skills. Governments and the health sector must also act quickly to scale up treatment and prevention programs.

BUILDING THE CAPACITY TO CARE

The Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia helps countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia develop the human resource capacity needed to combat HIV/AIDS.

Based in Kyiv, Ukraine, the Regional Knowledge Hub was officially launched in March 2004 by the American International Health Alliance (AIHA) in cooperation with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. Initial funding for the project was provided by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) as part of its BACKUP Initiative.

Since its inception, the Knowledge Hub has been steadfast in its commitment to improving the quality of care available to people living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We do this by:

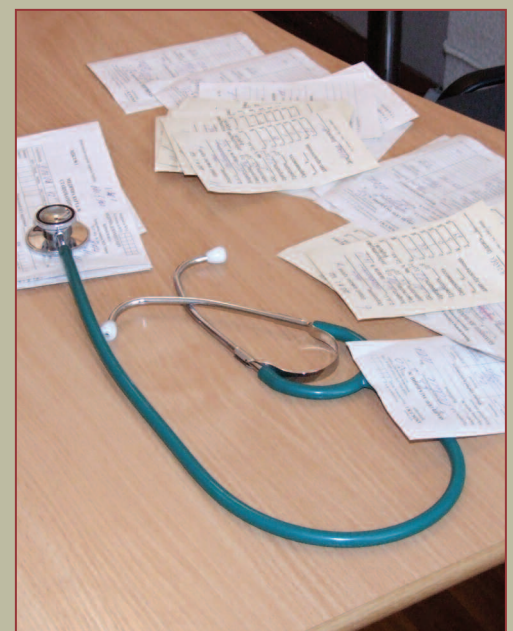
- developing HIV/AIDS expertise among health and allied professionals;
- providing direct technical assistance as needed;
- cultivating local training capacity so knowledge and skills can be passed on to others; and
- adapting, developing, and disseminating the latest evidence-based guidelines and HIV/AIDS care standards based on national and international best practices.

We recognize that institutional and health system capacity combine to form the foundation of any effective HIV/AIDS program. We also know that it is the knowledge and skills of individual care providers that serve as the cornerstones of this foundation. Together, these three components are fundamental to a country's ability to translate scarce national resources and international aid into effective HIV/AIDS treatment programs.

The Regional Knowledge Hub builds capacity at all of these levels by supporting countries in the region as they work to develop new care and treatment programs or to strengthen and scale up existing ones.

"We previously had little or no experience with the multidisciplinary team approach to care. The Knowledge Hub courses not only describe the method, they actually show it in practice. They clearly illustrate the important role social workers and non-medical caregivers play in HIV/AIDS care."

—Dr. Olga Dashovets,
infectious disease specialist,
Kyiv City AIDS Center,
Kyiv, Ukraine.



“In Ukraine, the Knowledge Hub has helped us break down a system that kept us closed off from our colleagues here and in other countries around the world, as well as from patients who need us desperately. It has helped us build a strong team of well-trained HIV/AIDS specialists capable of truly helping people living with the virus.”

—Dr. Svetlana Antoniuk, Head, HIV/AIDS Treatment and Care Department (Lavra AIDS Clinic), Gromashevsky Institute of Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases, Kyiv, Ukraine.

WHERE WE WORK

The Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia is part of a synergistic network that includes two sister centers in WHO’s European Region—one based in Vilnius, Lithuania, that focuses on harm reduction and another in Zagreb, Croatia, that concentrates on HIV/AIDS surveillance.

Together, these Knowledge Hubs are building technical capacity in countries throughout the region as they work to more effectively access and utilize grants available through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other large-scale donor organizations.

All three centers operate within the framework of WHO/Europe’s project, “Capability Strengthening for Improved Utilization of Financial Resources to Fight HIV/AIDS,” which is funded by GTZ.

SKILLS-BASED CLINICAL TRAINING: THE KNOWLEDGE HUB DIFFERENCE

The Regional Knowledge Hub has adopted a practical, systematic approach to building HIV/AIDS care and treatment capacity in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Our training methodology is guided by our commitment to support national goals and objectives and our courses are based on the latest evidence-based research combined with relevant WHO recommendations, country guidelines, and international best practices.



Working closely with partners throughout the region, we focus on building consensus among key stakeholders and helping them formulate a comprehensive strategy for strengthening health system capacity. We then assist with the design and implementation of a training program that fulfills that strategy and is supportable by a combination of national and international funding.

Regional Knowledge Hub courses stress a multidisciplinary approach to HIV treatment. This “care team” approach has been proven successful at addressing the many intersecting physical, emotional, and social support needs of people living with HIV. Our curricula promote cooperation among healthcare workers from a broad range of disparate specialties, as well as among medical professionals and the lay staff who work at nongovernmental organizations and other entities that provide HIV-related services.

Because a key objective of the Regional Knowledge Hub is to ensure people living with HIV or AIDS have access to a full continuum of care, our training programs are not limited to the physicians, nurses, and social workers who make up the traditional multidisciplinary care team. We also provide training for infectious disease specialists, ob/gyns, psychologists, policymakers, laboratory technicians, clinic administrators, prison system medical workers, and clinicians specializing in tuberculosis and substance abuse, as well as people living with HIV and other volunteers working with AIDS service organizations.

No matter what the subject, our faculty are noted national, regional, and international experts who bring a wealth of knowledge and real-world experience to the classroom. They are also skilled in adult and continuing education, as well as clinical mentoring and interactive learning techniques.

Courses are taught in well-equipped classrooms and at affiliated clinical sites that provide ample opportunity for hands-on training with patients—and with experienced HIV/AIDS care specialists, including physicians, nurses, social workers, peer counselors, and a wide range of other specialty care providers who work with people living with HIV. Some courses—in particular, those dealing with the provision of antiretroviral therapy—build on one another and are designed to be taken sequentially over the course of several months.

We cap attendance levels for our courses at 25 people to ensure optimal conditions for learning and we administer pre- and post-tests to help gauge the efficacy and relevance of each course. The results of these tests are used



As of March 2008, the Regional Knowledge Hub in Kyiv has developed or adapted 26 distinct courses in HIV/AIDS care and treatment; conducted more than 180 courses; and trained 4,110 HIV/AIDS care providers in 10 countries spanning Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Country	Number Trained	Number of Courses Taught
Azerbaijan	29	2
Belarus	121	10
Estonia	29	1
Kazakhstan	60	5
Kyrgyzstan	55	5
Moldova	62	4
Russia	1,942	80
Tajikistan	24	4
Ukraine	1,720	68
Uzbekistan	68	5



to continually evaluate and, when necessary, to revise course curricula and materials to better meet the needs of individual care providers and the health system as a whole.

Our courses are often conducted at the Regional Knowledge Hub in Kyiv or at the AIDS Training and Education Center in St. Petersburg, but we also hold many clinical courses on site and can arrange to hold trainings at institutions anywhere in the region upon request.

In addition to targeted training of specialized HIV/AIDS care teams, the Regional Knowledge Hub also works with national stakeholders to better integrate HIV education at schools of health professions throughout the region. By helping to strengthen programs at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, our work not only supports sustainable capacity building, it also encourages teaching the basics of HIV-related prevention and treatment to a broader community of healthcare providers. The end result is improved access to comprehensive, compassionate, high quality care and support for people living with HIV.

STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS, SAVING LIVES

The Regional Knowledge Hub's primary objective is to improve HIV/AIDS care and treatment in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Because assuring professional competence is a prerequisite for raising the standard of care available to people living with HIV, the Knowledge Hub collaborates with strategic partners in the region to develop or expand national certification processes for physicians, nurses, and social workers specializing in HIV/AIDS.

The Regional Knowledge Hub and Ukraine's National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education have developed a national physician certification process for specialists who have completed a series of courses in adult or pediatric antiretroviral therapy. In Russia, the St. Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies awards continuing education certificates to participants who have successfully completed training at the St. Petersburg AIDS Training and Education Center. Russia's Ministry of Health and Social Development also endorsed similar certification for Knowledge Hub courses throughout the Russian Federation.

In addition to its mission to improve HIV/AIDS care and treatment services in Eastern Europe and Central Asia by strengthening the skills of care providers and supporting the scale up of effective programs, the Knowledge Hub is working to institutionalize sustainable training capacity in the region.

When the Knowledge Hub was established in 2004, only a handful of clinicians in the region possessed sufficient clinical experience in HIV/AIDS treatment to play a meaningful role as course instructors. Instead, experts from Europe and the United States served as faculty, sharing their knowledge and extensive experience with the healthcare and allied professionals who attended the courses.

This dynamic started to change in 2005. By then, many of the first Ukrainian and Russian HIV/AIDS specialists trained by the Regional Knowledge Hub had acquired significant experience in their own right. With support from the Global Fund, the Knowledge Hub has been working with more than a dozen



healthcare providers to further develop their expertise and teaching skills. Increasingly, these clinical leaders serve as primary faculty for introductory and basic level courses.

The Knowledge Hub has also developed a cadre of clinical subject matter experts in the region who provide direct technical assistance to nations looking to assess their training needs and readiness to initiate or scale up antiretroviral therapy programs and other HIV-related services. Leading specialists from Europe and the United States serve as consultants as well.

Together, these experts have played a key role in developing national HIV/AIDS care and treatment plans and strategies for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as well as assisted countries in their application for funding from international donor organizations such as the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Knowledge Hub Case Study: Ukraine

The Regional Knowledge Hub—which is situated at the National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education in Kyiv—has played a critical role in Ukraine’s national HIV/AIDS care and treatment strategy.

Working with key national stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health, the Ukrainian National AIDS Center, All Ukrainian Network of PLWH, and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance—which are the principle recipients of Global Fund grants in the country—the Knowledge Hub and its affiliated clinical sites have conducted 68 courses and trained more than 1,720 Ukrainian healthcare professionals and allied caregivers since 2004.

The Regional Knowledge Hub and the National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education have developed a national physician certification process for specialists who have completed a series of courses in adult or pediatric antiretroviral therapy. To date, 146 doctors have earned certificates.

Analysis of pre- and post-test scores indicate that the vast majority of participants increased their level of knowledge by a minimum of 10 percentage points, with improvement being as high as 30-40 percent in some courses.

Collectively, Ukrainian practitioners trained by the Knowledge Hub provide antiretroviral therapy to some 6,000 people living with HIV or AIDS. Patients under their care report high levels of adherence to treatment, as well as satisfaction with the care they receive.



“The Knowledge Hub course I attended in Odessa gave me access to the richest pool of knowledge and experience regarding HIV/AIDS, and PMTCT in particular, that exists in the region today. This type of training provides critical practical experience for clinicians—especially ob/gyns who play a key role in educating patients about the importance of preventing HIV in the first place.”

—Dr. Zhanna Trumova, director, Outpatient Department, Kazakh National HIV/AIDS Center, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

“The workshop gave me a clear understanding of the need to create a healthcare team capable of addressing both the medical and social aspects of HIV/AIDS care. Sessions helped me clarify my own role in the provision of care—especially how effective counseling can help ensure patients are adherent to treatment recommendations.”

—Marina Barinova, social worker, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine.

COORDINATING A NETWORK OF STRATEGIC PARTNERS

AIHA works in close collaboration with key national and international stakeholders that both support and complement the Regional Knowledge Hub’s capacity building mandate.

In Ukraine, strategic partners include the Ministry of Health, the National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education, the Ukrainian National AIDS Center, All Ukrainian Network of PLWH and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance. Affiliated clinical sites include Lavra AIDS Clinic at the Gromoshevsky Institute of Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases, the Department of Infectious Diseases at Kyiv City Children’s Hospital No. 1, and the Southern Ukraine AIDS Education Center at Odessa Oblast Hospital.

In Russia, the Knowledge Hub collaborates with the AIDS Training and Education Center in St. Petersburg, which is supported by Russia’s Ministry of Health and Social Development and the St. Petersburg Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies. Practical, skills-based training is conducted at the Republican Infectious Disease Hospital at Ust-Izhora, Botkin Hospital (Infectious Disease Hospital No. 30), and the St. Petersburg AIDS Center.

The Regional Knowledge Hub is also working closely with the World Bank-funded Central Asia AIDS Control Project, providing technical assistance and training faculty for the Regional Training Center on HIV Care and Treatment in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Between October 2004 and December 2007, the Regional Knowledge Hub secured funding in excess of 2.4 million US dollars to support training programs conducted during that time. National and international donors include:

- Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- UNICEF
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- World Health Organization
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
- William J. Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative

COURSES AVAILABLE AT THE REGIONAL KNOWLEDGE HUB OR AIDS TRAINING AND EDUCATION CENTER

- Initiation of ART for Adults
- Adult ART Onsite Mentoring
- Advanced Adult ART and Management of Opportunistic Infections
- Initiation of ART for Adults in Correctional Settings
- Adult ART Onsite Mentoring in Correctional Settings
- Advanced Adult ART and Management of Opportunistic Infections in Correctional Settings
- Initiation of Pediatric ART
- Pediatric ART Onsite Mentoring
- Advanced Pediatric ART and Management of Opportunistic Infections
- HIV/AIDS Palliative Care
- HIV/AIDS Nursing
- Management of HIV and TB Co-infection
- HIV/AIDS Case Management
- ART for Injecting Drug Users (with or without Substitution Therapy Component)
- Adherence to ART
- ART During Pregnancy
- PMTCT: General Knowledge
- PMTCT: HIV Counseling and Testing
- PMTCT: Obstetrics and Gynecology
- PMTCT: Pediatric Issues
- PMTCT for Decision-makers
- Laboratory Monitoring of HIV Infection and ART
- HIV/AIDS Clinic Administration and Management
- Introduction to HIV Care for Adults
- Training-of-Trainers Course: Initiation of ART for Adults
- Training-of-Trainers Course: Introduction to HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment

Detailed course descriptions can be downloaded at www.AIDSKnowledgeHub.org



To learn more about the Regional Knowledge Hub for the Care and Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Eurasia, or to inquire about our courses and other capacity building programs, please visit www.AIDSKnowledgeHub.org.

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