

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Partnership: Health of the Capital's Children **Bringing Crucial Information to Astana's Doctors and the Population**

With funding from the ExxonMobil/ USAID Global Development Alliance Partnership, ZdravPlus and its local partner, the Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians (KAFF) are working to improve the health of children in Kazakhstan's capital city, Astana. In cooperation with the Astana City Akimat and the City Health Department, the project "Partnership: Health of the Capital's Children," was officially launched in February 2004.

This project aims to improve treatment and early diagnosis of childhood illness by training doctors in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy, which addresses the five conditions that cause most childhood mortality in the developing world, including diarrhea and acute respiratory infection—the focuses of the Astana project.

As of the end of July, nearly sixty doctors representing Astana's eight Family Group Practices (FGPs), as well as polyclinics and hospitals have received training in the IMCI methods. Additionally, ten local doctors have been prepared as trainers, and are now running trainings in IMCI for their colleagues. During the training, each participating doctor receives a set of WHO manuals that are used extensively throughout the course, including a desktop reference designed for use in diagnosing and treating children in clinical visits. The 11-day trainings include both classroom and clinical work, allowing trainees to practice their skills with patients while their trainers are nearby. Doctors also receive an additional two-day session on interpersonal communication skills, provided by KAFP and ZdravPlus trainers.

In addition to the clinical component, the IMCI strategy recognizes that parents and other caretakers of children under age five are key partners in ensuring children's health. Thus, the Partnership project includes a "Keeping Children Healthy" campaign, aimed at involving the population and educating parents.

The population involvement component was launched on June 10, with an open-air event during the Astana City Day festival. Actors performed skits to educate passersby on treatment and risks of diarrhea in small children and the audience was invited to answer questions in a game-show format on the related topics of dangerous signs, recognizing and treating diarrhea at home, breastfeeding, and antibiotic use. Prizes, contributed by both Exxon Mobil and USAID, were given to participating families. Brochures with the key health messages were also distributed.



Later in June, ZdravPlus and KAFP staff visited the FGPs and polyclinics that had expressed interest in participating in the population involvement component, working with groups of volunteers, including parents and some medical staff. These volunteers were given short scripts



The USAID-funded ZdravPlus Program provides technical assistance and training to improve the health of Central Asian populations by improving health delivery systems

on the topics of diarrhea, breastfeeding, and antibiotic use, and asked to form small groups and prepare their own skits. Over the next few weeks, ZdravPlus and KAFP staff regularly visited the teams to provide feedback and help them improve their performances and get the messages across most effectively.

After several weeks of preparation, the groups were visited by a jury of IMCI-trained health professionals from outside the participating institutions. The jury awarded points to each team based on the number of key messages included in the skits (chosen from a list of 17 provided); how interesting the skit was; how clearly messages were delivered; how many people were in the audience; and extra creativity—such as use of poetry, music, interesting costumes, or scenery. The jury’s goal was not to choose winners or losers, but to help the groups improve their messages. On average, each team was able to get 13 of the 17 key messages across to the audience.

The groups were extremely creative. Scenarios included a family with a sick child traveling on a train, with a grandmother who recommends not feeding the child with diarrhea at all, and a doctor sitting on the next seat stepping in to explain the correct treatment for diarrhea and what danger signs to look for. Another FGP featured a TV commercial between skits, in which one mother dressed up as “breast milk” and another as a “brain” to show the importance of breastfeeding to healthy child development. One Family Doctor even donned a diaper himself to play the role of a sick infant.

Taking the jury’s feedback into account, the teams of volunteer “actors” performed their skits for parents and teachers at kindergartens near their FGPs/ polyclinic in early August. All in all, twenty-seven performances took place at fifteen different kindergartens.

The volunteer teams then had an opportunity to compete against each other in a talent show on August 28 at the Gorkii Theater in central Astana. Teams from the nine participating health care facilities were evaluated by a jury including representatives from the City Health Department, USAID, ExxonMobil, and the City Department of Education. Small prizes were given to all participants, and the three teams representing FGPs Molodezhnaya and Lesozavodskaya and Polyclinic #6 received special recognition for their performances. FGPs Demeu and Lesozavodskaya were awarded the title of “best fans.” The event also provided an opportunity for audience participation, with quiz-show style questions and creative contests to test the knowledge of the audience on diarrhea in young children, breastfeeding, and antibiotic use. TV, radio, and newspapers in Astana highlighted the event throughout the weekend and into the coming week.



Concurrent to the work of the volunteer theater troupes, printed materials with the key health messages are being distributed to the population through FGPs and Polyclinics, and ZdravPlus TV spots are being shown on two of Astana’s TV channels, with air time being provided for free by the Astana City Akimat working in cooperation with the Astana City Health Department.

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