

# Road to Results

ACHIEVING SUCCESS STEP BY STEP

## Creating A Sustainable And Functional Drug Information Center, Karaganda

*April 2003*

At the end of February, Mr. Musinov, a 73 year-old pensioner from Karaganda, came to the Karaganda Drug Information Center to wish them “many, many thanks” after receiving successful treatment information which helped clear up a number of side effects he had been experiencing from a drug he had been prescribed. While being treated on an outpatient basis for chronic pancreatitis, Mr. Musinov had been receiving lactic acid, a biologically active supplement. He then read about the services of the Center in a local newspaper. At the Center, Mr. Musinov asked for information on a less expensive and more effective treatment for his condition. He was supplied with all available information on the supplements he was using and a number of other relevant drugs, and was referred to his doctor. The Center then rang Mr Musinov’s doctor with information on newer evidence-based drugs for treating his condition, and possible negative complications of using biologically active supplements as treatment. After three weeks of successful treatment with a new effective drug at 3.5 times lower cost, the pensioner was motivated to make the special journey to the Center expressly to thank the staff for their help.

The Karaganda Drug Information Center, which opened on June 1, 2001, is the first of its kind in Kazakhstan. Its key achievement has been to create conditions for more rational use of drugs and to increase access to information on major essential drugs for healthcare professionals, pharmacists and patients. Establishing the Center has been possible thanks to USAID-funded ZdravPlus Project assistance. ZdravPlus’ contribution has included not only financing and provision of equipment, but also support in key areas of the Center’s work such as training, technical assistance and consultations, workshop management, and information dissemination. A year and a half after the Center opened, there is a

steady trend indicating the Center’s sustainable development, especially since the Center recently established itself as a non-governmental organization.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, almost all pharmacy activities went into private hands, and it became difficult to get accurate information on drugs. Individuals, including doctors, could only get limited and usually biased information on drugs from advertisements or directly from manufacturer-provided brochures. Since its creation, the Center has provided detailed information and advice in reply to over 1,500 requests from doctors, pharmacists, and patients such as the elderly pensioner above.



*Gulya Ermekbaeva, Head of the DIC*

The Center has devised and widely promoted an essential drug list in collaboration with the Oblast Health Department, based on WHO recommendations adapted for local needs, for use in hospitals and family group practices in the oblast. On top of this, the Center has provided training to health facilities on the advantages of using this restricted list of effective, safe, and affordable drugs. Training provided to physicians on correct prescription of drugs has resulted in a gradual transition from prescribing of brand names to generic name drugs. According to the Head of Oblast Drug Policy at the Oblast Health



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

Department, Mr Kaiershan Mabeev, the Department cooperates with the Center because it is very helpful. “The Center is the only place with access to all available information, through the internet and a wide variety of literature sources, which is not accessible to doctors and hospitals.”

In addition, the Center helped establish an oblast (state) level Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee and individual committees in all larger hospitals of Karaganda Oblast. According to Bakhtagul Yermekbaeva, head of the Center, the heads of these committees “give recommendations on what drugs should be used in their departments, and they then discuss these recommendations. They do this so that they can make wise decisions about which essential and effective drugs should be used.” Managers and administrators of healthcare facilities have been trained in simple methods of pharmaceutical and economic analysis such as ABC, VEN etc. which help managers to determine the most used drugs and therefore to help prioritize needs.

The Center also provides relevant information to physicians and faculty of the medical academy on evidence-based medicine at their request. One recommendation made by the Center was that the broad use of paracetamol in obstetrics was not necessary. As a result, there has been a decrease in demand for this drug at the hospital level. The research continuously carried out by the DIC has immediate results, such as development and implementation of international treatment standards and recommendations in the larger

clinical hospital of the oblast for treating brain edema, stroke and sub-arachnoid hemorrhage.

Although the Drug Information Center is the only one of its kind in Kazakhstan, it has received a great deal of interest from other oblasts in Kazakhstan and even from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Center’s staff want to help roll out their work so that more people have access to information on rational drug use. Staff are concerned, however, about resources. They acknowledge that they owe much of their existence to ZdravPlus. In order to ensure sustainability in the future, the Center is actively looking for new revenues and grants. A recent study tour to the Drug Information Center in Moldova impressed the Karaganda staff. The Moldovan Center has existed independently for eight years and receives its funding from grants. Sergey Muratov, staff pharmacologist at the Center, said: “On our return from Moldova, we started making contact with different organizations. We know that receiving grants is the only way we have of surviving.”

Ultimately, the Drug Information Center has proved itself to be an impressive resource, which is used regularly as an information source by all levels of people involved in the health system — from patient to provider. ZdravPlus’ Coordinator in Karaganda, Nadezdah Khe, sums up the Center’s contribution through providing access to up-to-date and relevant information on evidence-based drugs and their rational use: “The Drug Information Center” she says “is the window that lets us see the world.”

## For more information

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