

Road to Results

ACHIEVING SUCCESS STEP BY STEP

General Practitioners' Association of Uzbekistan

July 2004

Striving to protect members' labor, legal, and social rights, to raise the status of General Practitioners, and to improve the quality of health care available to the citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan

This is a central tenet of the charter for the newly formed General Practitioners' Association of Uzbekistan which has received continuous support from the USAID-funded ZdravPlus project. The doctors of what has now become the General Practitioners' (GP) Association were initially brought together through a GP training of trainers program in 1998. As these physicians came together in an effort to continue their own medical education and help other physicians do the same, they realized that they had the skills and the opportunity to do even more, if they could form an official organization. After nearly two years of efforts by the GP Association Initiative Committee, the Association finally gained legal status in April 2004.

Now, of the over 4,000 GPs in Uzbekistan, close to 200 are dues-paying members of the GP Association. These include newly trained GPs in most oblasts. Many Association leaders are themselves GP trainers. The Association is expanding as it gains members through further trainings and recruitment. When recently asked to name the one most important activity of the Association, members found it impossible narrow the list that far. Executive Director Sharaf Kasimov cited continuing medical education, while others chimed in with raising the status of general practitioners in Uzbekistan, and protecting the rights of doctors and patients.

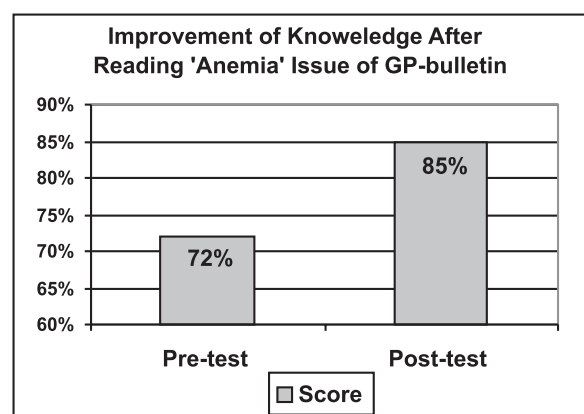
While they have been officially recognized by the Uzbek Government only for a short time, the GP Association has had a major success. With technical support from ZdravPlus, they have published two family medicine bulletins emphasizing the use of Evidence-Based Medicine (EBM). The first one, focusing on **Anemia**, gave straightforward and practical evidence-based information on all aspects of the subject,

including understandable information on nutrition-related issues and a quick reference table for physicians to use during patient appointments.

The government was so impressed by the first edition that they agreed to finance the first year's worth of print runs out of the World Bank Health loan.

With ZdravPlus assistance, a number of the regional health authorities established a network of coordinators who are responsible for calling meetings of the family doctors at the district level. This provides an opportunity for the bulletins to be distributed and discussed and also brings together local physicians who might get involved in GP Association activities in the future.

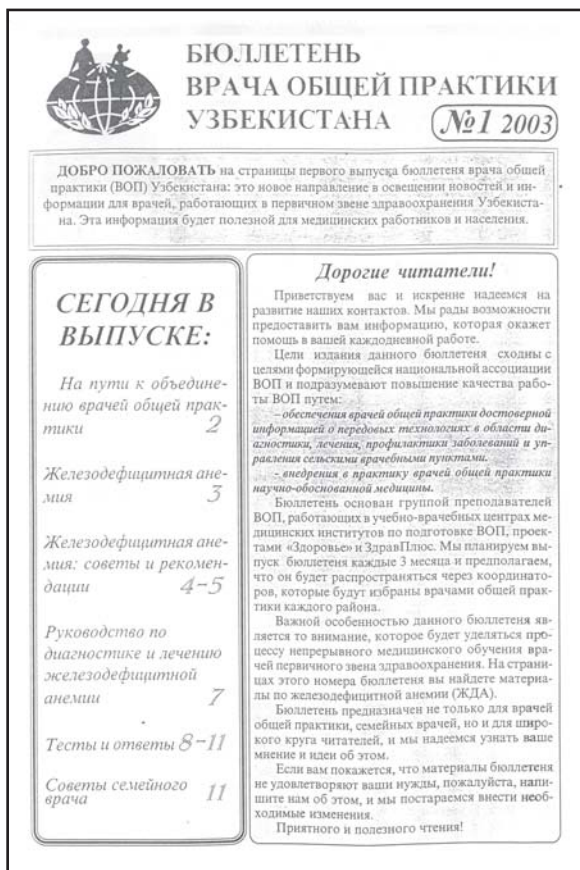
A key feature of the Bulletin was the Association's inclusion of test questions based on information contained in the Bulletin. Doctors were asked to take the test before and after reading the contents. Those inclined to help themselves by simply reading the answers found that they were phrased in such a way that forced a thorough understanding of the question.



Simple prizes such as stethoscopes were offered to encourage doctors to read and participate in the questionnaire, and to motivate the district coordinators to call the meetings. Test results sent back to the GP Association showed significant increases in knowledge by the participants.



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



1st issue of the GP Association Bulletin

The GP Association has big plans for the Bulletin. Test results will form the basis for establishing GP Association “Accreditation Points,” which they hope will later count towards the national accreditation of health care workers. They expect that the Bulletin will grow into a reference library for the literature-starved primary health care sector of Uzbekistan, and could well become a focal point for educating new doctors and providing continuing medical education throughout the region. Already, the second bulletin, focusing on **Hypertension**, has gone out and two more are in production, the third looking at **Respiratory Infections** and the fourth at **Diarrhea**.

Evidence-based medicine must be a health care priority in Central Asia in order to modernize

practices and increase the safety and effectiveness of care. But putting this crucial information in the hands of doctors, and ensuring they grasp its principles is the ultimate challenge. The GP Association Bulletin is a step in the right direction. Already there are requests from neighboring countries to supply the journal there; in particular the Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians has just received a grant to begin production of a bulletin inspired by the GP Association’s, and the Association has received an e-mail asking: “When does the Association plan to translate the bulletin into Tajik?”

In addition to the Bulletin, General Practitioners’ Association members are active in many other areas. In a continual effort to improve their own knowledge and provide the best services available to their members they actively participate in medical conferences and expect to plan their own in the future. The GP Association would also like to be able to provide legal support to family doctors who are in difficulty and will look at hindrances to the practice of family medicine – such as outdated sanitary requirements and the paperwork required of family doctors – in order to make recommendations for improvement. Members of the General Practitioners’ Association are very proud of their initial successes and are working hard to continue improving the quality of GP care in Uzbekistan.



GP Association members attend a Conference on Quality Improvement held in Tashkent

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