

Road to Results

ACHIEVING SUCCESS STEP BY STEP

ZdravPlus Training of Laboratory Technicians in Rural Primary Healthcare Clinics in the Ferghana Valley

August 2002

As part of its initiative to improve healthcare in Uzbekistan, USAID-funded ZdravPlus recently held a training seminar for laboratory technicians from the Ferghana Valley. This is the first time such training has been undertaken for rural health workers in Central Asia. Although the World Bank provided funds to upgrade health facilities at rural primary health care clinics,



including laboratory equipment, little or no training had been provided to the laboratory technicians at these facilities. In order to address this, ZdravPlus, in cooperation with its partner, the Center for Disease Control, Atlanta (CDC), has developed a training program which recently began in the Ferghana Valley.

The program is designed to train two laboratory technicians from each rural clinic provided with lab equipment through the World Bank loan, and the initial plan is to repeat this with six lab technicians on six occasions. Monitoring of the first training participants will take place at their place of work two months after the initial training and before the next seminar is repeated, in order to learn from the results of the monitoring what adjustments/improvements are required.

In preparing for the program, ZdravPlus worked with a consultant from CDC to hold a training of

trainers' seminar for key technicians from around the region. Out of this, in partnership with the key local chief specialist on lab diagnostics of the Ferghana Oblast Health Department — Dr. Alla Memjanova, a teaching lesson manual was developed. ZdravPlus also translated Amanda Cooper's excellent and practical laboratory manual into Uzbek, which serves as the basis of the course.

Despite having World Bank equipment, the rural clinics do not have much in the way of supplied reagents, so ZdravPlus worked with the local health department to produce a costed list of required reagents based on the tests described in the Amanda Cooper manual. However, one of the big questions in all development work is sustainability, and this is of particular importance for laboratory work where reagents need to be continually supplied. With this in mind, ZdravPlus has, from the beginning, been working with the rural health clinics to develop a new funding system, whereby each clinic is funded on a per capita basis and is independently able to decide how to spend its own money. In this context, it was decided to supply an initial six months' worth of reagents to each laboratory, with the plan being that the clinics will in time be able to fund the continued supply themselves.

Training Seminar

The initial training seminar commenced on the August 19, 2002. It lasted four days, and six participants were trained by the local CDC-trained trainers. Emphasis throughout the training was on practical skills, with the majority of time spent on explaining and then supervising the tests, ensuring that the trainees could use the Amanda Cooper manual and could perform the necessary tasks.

The trainers explained and demonstrated to the students how to prepare smears, how to carry out



The USAID-funded ZdravPlus Program provides technical assistance and training to improve the health

of Central Asian populations by improving health delivery systems

smear microscopy and interpret the results. Furthermore, it was important to improve the theoretical knowledge of the participants. To achieve this, situational games and participative, problem based methods were used. The small size of the class allowed close supervision and assessment of competence to be carried out at each stage.

Impact

The program created quite a stir locally, with patients coming to the training site requesting tests (in the past they would have had to travel to a more distant center for simple analyses). The participants tested each other during the training, and some were found to be anemic.



All the participants were delighted with the training, as indicated by the following quotes:

- “I liked the seminar. This is the first seminar organized for SVP lab technicians. I found out many new things and will apply the knowledge obtained in practice.”
- “Such seminars are very much needed by us lab technicians. The teaching methodology is new for us but it is very effective. The work of our

trainers was directed to make us understand everything and be able to repeat it all.”

- “I am very glad that I was able to get knowledge at this seminar.”
- “I liked the manual for the participants. Unfortunately we do not currently have books on lab diagnostics in the Uzbek language. This manual will be a handbook for us as it is made very well and we like the design.”

People have been very enthusiastic about this unique training organized by ZdravPlus. Dr Alla Memjanova herself has become personally interested in the improvement of the quality of lab diagnostics at the primary care level and has said she will hold refresher courses in the future based on her own initiative.

Summary

The program illustrates a number of ways in which the ZdravPlus program is functioning in the region. First, it draws upon all available resources and builds cooperation between partner organizations, in this case CDC. Secondly, as demonstrated by the translation of the training manuals into Uzbek and Russian, it aims to be as culturally appropriate as possible. Thirdly, by enabling the clinics to provide the best possible care for their patients through new lab diagnostics, it draws them into utilizing the new payment system for sustaining that care. Fourthly, through a training of trainers course, it enables the local Uzbek health staff to take control of their own training program, thereby integrating the training into the established health care system. And fifthly, by initiating such courses and providing the initial supplies and training, ZdravPlus motivates and empowers people within the system to change things for the good of the patient.

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