



## **GBC Member Trip to Russia: Site Visit Details**

### **Russian Scientific and Practical Center for Assistance to HIV-infected Pregnant Women and Children, Us't-Izhora**

Between 1988 and 1999, a tragedy occurred in Russia: more than 270 children already in medical centers were infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). This startling phenomenon alarmed the entire country. The Russian Ministry of Health decided to open a federal infection clinic on the grounds of the Federal Infectious Diseases Clinic in the St. Petersburg Region, in order to serve as a children's AIDS clinical center.

HIV-infected children from all across the country were directed to the new hospital because it was the only facility where they could access the necessary medical treatment. Today more than 300 HIV-positive children on the hospital grounds are receiving comprehensive ARV therapy. In 1997 a specialized prenatal ward for prevention of mother-to-child transmission was opened in the clinic under the leadership of Eugeny Voronin. About 1000 women have received the full course of prenatal preventive therapy and 99.5% of them have given birth to healthy HIV-negative babies.

In the years 1997-1998, a new problem arose in Russia in dealing with HIV. One in five children born to HIV-positive mothers were abandoned. This trend was closely related to the mother's social status. The majority of these women were drug addicts. In 1999, a new ward was opened at the hospital for HIV-infected children living without any parental care. In the center for abandoned children, a number of the patients spend sustained periods of time in intensive therapy. After stabilizing the child's condition, it is necessary to look into the following:

- The children's sustained health and positive clinical-immunological signs.
- The social adaptability of the children.

The specific aims of the ward are to allow the children to achieve what they could have achieved if they were not HIV-positive. Also, the hospital strives to help them uncover their own talents and gifts, while preparing them to adapt to today's society.

Ideally, every child should live in a family setting. Unfortunately, because of existing social prejudices, it is nearly impossible to find a family for every child. For this reason, the clinic personnel strive to create a family-like environment at the center. A special building is being built where every child will have their own room. Older children go to school and often pursue musical or artistic pursuits.

### **Lunch with the American Chamber of Commerce, St. Petersburg Chapter**

The American Chamber of Commerce in Russia is an independent non-governmental organization headed by its president, Andrew B. Somers, who is appointed by its governing Board of Directors. A full-time staff

of nearly two dozen in Moscow and St. Petersburg provides direction and support for the membership-directed organization.

**Mission:**

The Chamber's most important assets are its members. They are clients, workforce, and strength. The mission is to promote the development of commercial relations between the Russian Federation and the international community. AmCham seeks constructive solutions to trade and investment problems that protect and promote the legitimate common economic interests of its member companies. AmCham does so with integrity and respect for its host country.

**AmCham St. Petersburg Chapter:**

AmCham St. Petersburg marked its tenth anniversary in 2007. The growth of the Chapter has been steady and impressive; in ten short years, it has grown from 11 founding members to over 160. It holds regular social and policy events, inviting government officials and local experts to speak at breakfast forums, seminars and committee meetings. Through the work of its eight active and dynamic committees, St. Petersburg has been able to influence local policies, demonstrating an impact that was acknowledged by the Office of the Authorized Representative of the RF President for the Northwest Region and the administrations of the city of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad Oblast.

**What AmCham does:**

The American Chamber of Commerce in Russia is committed to creating a more business-friendly environment in the Russian Federation. Acting as a link between members, policy-makers and business leaders in the U.S. and Russia, the Chamber works to identify common problems to normal business operations and achieve mutually-beneficial solutions. Through its adherence to providing concrete returns on its membership fees investments – the ROI business model, AmCham broadly advocates regulatory improvements in the U.S. and Russia, offers concrete assistance to individual company members in resolving problems, and provides business development opportunities through its networking events.

**St. Petersburg Health Community Botkin Hospital of Infectious Diseases**

The Botkin hospital, which celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2007, is one of the oldest hospitals in St. Petersburg and the biggest infectious disease hospital not only in Russia but also in Eastern Europe.

S. P. Botkin is linked to many of Russia's medical innovations. In 1883, for example, Botkin and his students created the first medical carriage in Russia, to transport infectious patients. He was also the innovator of a card catalogue for registering patients, which allowed doctors to classify diseases through different categories for the development of medical statistical studies in the country. During post-war reconstruction, the hospital was expanded to allow 1210 patients to be housed in the hospital, making it the largest in-patient hospital in Europe.

Today, Botkin is a decentralized hospital, spread over 12.5 hectares in the center of St. Petersburg, and offering 24-hour treatment by specialists to citizens of the city and the surrounding area. Every year, the hospital treats more than 35,000 patients. The ambulatory clinic section treats over 120,000 patients per year.

In 1987, the Botkin hospital was the first hospital in Russia to create a clinical center for the treatment of patients with AIDS, including an anonymous testing unit. In recent years, because of the spread of AIDS infection in the country and the city, nearly all the departments now treat HIV-positive patients, including the infectious-surgical department and the obstetric department, where HIV-positive women give birth and receive neonatal care for their newborns.

Since 1994, a number of new departments have opened in the hospital including; a permanent clinic for the observation and treatment of HIV+ patients, a second rehabilitation ward and an intensive therapy center available for thirteen patients, an intensive care unit, the City Infectious Pathology Center, a HIV prevention center, a TB evacuation and hospitalization ward, a video observation system, and a technical team. All appointees are up to speed with the newest technologies and research methods in external detoxification. Furthermore, they are also qualified to use the most modern MARS (Molecular Absorbing and Recirculation System), and hyperbaric oxygenation rooms – pressure chambers. In 1995 a health clinic was opened for the homeless and those recently in the prison system.

### **Street Outreach and At-risk Population Programs in Russia**

Since 1994, Doctors of the World-USA (DOW) has been working to address one of the more devastating consequences of the collapse of the Russian economy and its social institutions – the crisis of street and at-risk children and youth. The United Nations' Labor Organization estimates that at least 10-16,000 children spend some, if not all, of their time on the streets of St. Petersburg. These children suffer from malnutrition, respiratory and skin infections, other infectious diseases, pneumonia, and other illnesses associated with life on the streets. Related problems include substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, TB, depression, developmental disabilities from neglect and abuse, and trauma from sexual and/or physical abuse. Most children exhibit poor self-image, behavioral problems, and delays in social and intellectual development. The long-term options provided by the government for street and at-risk children and youth are limited. If they are not sent to criminal detention centers, these children are likely to end up in orphanages.

### **Community and Family-based Alternatives to Life on the Streets or Institutionalization**

The aim of DOW's Russia programming is to provide innovative, replicable, community-based services to Russia's street and at-risk children and to strengthen Russian commitment and capacity to provide such services as an alternative to the institution-based child welfare system. The goals of the program are to:

- **Prevent homelessness and institutionalization**
- **Restore family support to street children and adolescents and to those in institutions**
- **Preserve the physical and mental health of street and at-risk children and adolescents**
- **Empower at-risk youth to lead healthy and productive lives**

To achieve these goals, DOW initiated holistic, child-centered interventions at critical points of entry: in at-risk homes, on the street, in children's centers, and in service sites jointly implemented with government partners as outlined below. To ensure local community involvement and sustainability of services for at-risk children and youth, DOW has established the Russian non-governmental organization **Doctors to Children (DTC)** with which it co-implements its projects and which can carry on services in the long-term as a local provider. Over the past 13 years, **DOW/DTC have provided critical services to more than 8,500 neglected, runaway or abandoned children and youth** in St. Petersburg.

**Drop-In Centers for Youth and Overnight Shelter** DOW/DTC first opened a Drop-In Center in 2001 to serve the population of children and youth lacking the official registration needed to access vital care

services in St. Petersburg. In a unique partnership with the city administration, a second Drop-In Center was opened in Frunzensky District in 2005 with support from the city government and Johnson & Johnson. Drop-In Centers provide children with essential medical, psychosocial, and legal support services in an environment that affirms their dignity and encourages their self-motivation. At Drop-In Centers open 7 days a week including holidays, clients are engaged in programs designed to ultimately place them into a family home, vocational program, or enable them to live independently as an adult. Drop-In Center staff also work with at-risk families to support them in providing a nurturing environment for their children. Multidisciplinary case management, a new approach in Russia, is the core service approach utilized. Both Drop-In Centers provide educational, recreational, cultural, and group-work activities to clients, and offer vocational consultations and access to vocational training programs.

In partnership with Frunzensky District, in early 2007 DOW/DTC opened an Overnight Shelter alongside its Frunzensky Drop-In Center. This facility provides around the clock contact with street and at-risk children and youth and thus plays a critical role in affecting high-risk behavior and enabling early interventions. By providing safe accommodation, meals, hygiene, and emergency counseling and medical care, the shelter meets urgent needs while encouraging participation in regular Drop-In Center programs. In its first six months of operation, 74 adolescents benefited from these services, including 36 who were confirmed as HIV-positive and were being assisted in registration at the City AIDS Center.

**Halfway House** In early 2007, DOW/DTC also opened a Halfway House for street and at-risk youth to assist them in transitioning away from homelessness or unhealthy living situations to independent living or appropriate family placement. Through client-centered case management, Halfway House residents are provided with training in life and work skills, educational support and tutoring, psychological counseling, access to medical care and to drug or alcohol rehabilitation, legal support, and other services. During their period of residence at the Halfway House, DOW/DTC staff work to secure a stable housing placement for the client and, wherever feasible or beneficial, work towards family reunification.

**HIV/AIDS Services – Outreach Project** In partnership with the CDC and St. Petersburg AIDS Center, DOW/DTC conducted an HIV survey among street youth in St. Petersburg in 2006. In response to the alarming 37.4% HIV prevalence revealed through this survey, DOW/DTC have launched a multifaceted program of HIV prevention, testing, care, support, and access to treatment. Through collaboration with a network of providers in St. Petersburg, this project is increasing access to voluntary counseling and testing, reducing barriers to care, and providing critical and targeted HIV prevention information and services. It is a mobile unit which circulates around the city, with doctors and volunteers providing necessary support to street youth.

**Street outreach program for commercial sex workers implemented by NGO Stellit** On the 1st of September 2004 a consortium of non-governmental organizations started the project GLOBUS (Global Unification of Efforts). This project is realized within the grant of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. One of the tasks of the project is prevention of HIV-infection among the most vulnerable social groups, including those who provide transactional sex services (The project “Prevention of HIV/AIDS among commercial sex workers”).

**Partners of the project:** the Botkin Infectious Disease Hospital #30, City Narcological Hospital, City Center for HIV and Infectious Disease Prevention and Control, City consulting-diagnostic center for juvenile reproductive health “Uventa”, District dermatovenerologic dispensaries, District narcological dispensaries, District women consultations

#### **Project measures**

The project includes HIV prevention measures, and also specialized work with HIV-positive sex workers.

The outreach work is implemented through mobile autocenters where sex workers receive consultations on medical, psychological and safe sex issues.

### **City infectious disease hospital for children Number 3**

The Pediatric Infectious Disease Hospital #3 is a federal multi-disciplinary hospital which provides specialized help to children under the age of 18. The hospital's primary areas of work are gastroenterology, infections (especially HIV-infections), TB, dermatology and narcotics. The hospital can accommodate 230 patients for routine and emergency medical procedures. There is also a rehabilitation center and diagnostic laboratories on-site. In all of the necessary departments mothers have access to their children up to the age of seven. Mothers of infants in their first year are provided with beds and food and are allowed to stay with their children.

### **HIV-ward for HIV-positive children and children with pre-natal HIV infections**

In this ward there are specialized HIV and other internal infection treatments for children that are up to fourteen days old and children with prenatal HIV-infections. In 2005 the center opened an overnight treatment center for HIV-positive children (the selection and commencement of antiretroviral therapy). Express diagnosis is conducted here as well. The ward works in close contact with the city's HIV Center in preventing and fighting AIDS. Also, the ward houses the Chair of pediatric infection studies for the St. Petersburg 6 Medical Academy - I. Mechnikov.

### **TB-ward**

This is the only ward for children with TB, and has experience in treating children of various ages and also in their infancy. In treating TB, various methods are used such as diet-therapy, pharmacotherapy, physical therapy, inhalation, medical physical education, and close contact with nature. All patients have the opportunity to complete their treatment at the TB sanatorium at the local or federal level. During the treatment, children can continue their schoolwork with teachers and during their free time they can occupy themselves with arts and crafts, computer games, tennis, movies, and nature walks. They also hold concerts and plays showcasing their talent.

The Hospital was established in 1889 and continued to provide its important services throughout the Nazi blockades in 1941-44, adapting rapidly to the needs of the city.

Recently, the Hospital was renovated, refurnished, and updated on behalf on donations from Sweden, Finland, and Germany.

### **Saint Petersburg State Health Institution – City AIDS Center**

The AIDS and infection prevention and treatment center is a specialized institute that provides help to HIV-positive people and people living with AIDS. The Center has walk-in clinical services and overnight sections (200 beds), where patients can get surgical or gynecological help. For people with serious AIDS-related illnesses there is a special hospice with 25 beds (12 Bumajnyaya street).

In addition to providing medical help, the AIDS center is responsible for organizing and implementing HIV prevention projects. The preventive ward also gives out informational literature on this topic: leaflets, brochures, posters, cards, etc. They hold special events related to AIDS issues. Thanks to new technology, a computer game has been developed that teaches children about HIV transmission and prevention.

The polyclinic holds an epidemiology department that regularly monitors the spread of HIV infection in the city. There is also an anonymous consulting room, where people can come and get medical guidance on HIV matters. Here one can exchange needles and get free condoms and HIV/AIDS information. The polyclinic is set up so that patients can access a variety of different medical services, including free dental appointments.

The polyclinic is a cornerstone of the Hospital's services since the number of children born from HIV positive mothers has been growing. Pediatric services take place daily at Bumajnaya ulica. There is also a "Mother and Child Room" where during the day the mother, father and the child can get medical checkups.

There is also a mobile medical staff that provides medical care at homes to those who are registered at the Center. Patients are also provided with legal support as needed.

The Center is also working with public non-governmental organizations on HIV prevention programs targeting high-risk groups in the city.