



PARTNERS IN HEALTH NURSING PROJECT FOR UKRAINE



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Meeting in Ukraine. L-r: Paulette Schatz (PIH Program Manager); Dr. Tatyana Chernyshenko (Senior Specialist, Ukrainian Ministry of Health); Maury Miloff (CIDA); Yuri Soubbotin (World Health Org. Liaison Officer for Ukraine).

In the past four years, Canadian nursing professionals -- most of them with a Ukrainian family background and from the Western provinces -- have travelled to Ukraine to help this newly-independent country update its nursing programs. And Ukrainians have come to North America to look at the Canadian way of doing things. The exchange is proving to be a learning experience for both sides -- an opportunity for Ukrainians to gain the knowledge and nursing skills they require to cope in a post-Communist, market-based economy, and for Canadians to widen their view of the world and gain a foothold in an emerging global market.

Aimed at supporting the transition to a democratic society in Ukraine, the Canada Ukraine Partners Program was launched in 1992, with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency. It has three components: health, public administration, and civil society.

The Canadian Society for International Health is administering the health component of the program, Partners in Health. The nursing segment, in the first few years, focused on individual placements of Canadian nurses and nursing specialists in Ukraine. However, these single placements provided only a beginning. Ongoing links between insti-

tutions were needed for continuity in capacity-building.

The objective of the third phase, which began in January this year, is to foster exchanges between Canadian and Ukrainian health institutions for mutual benefit, provide training in leadership skills, and help Ukraine develop a baccalaureate and master's nursing educational program. The overall objective is to help Ukraine's nursing curriculum meet international standards.

Ukraine has 110 schools of nursing but only four are college-based and have four-year programs; at most schools, training lasts two years. There are no professional organizations so there is little networking. And the nursing schools are run by physicians rather than nursing professionals.

Canadian nursing professionals say Ukraine is "where Canada was 50 years ago." The aim is to increase knowledge and develop leadership skills among Ukrainian nurses so that they can take over the schools and improve nursing education.

Collaboration among Ukraine's Ministry of Health, the University of Alberta, Grant MacEwan Community College, and the Canadian Nurses Association has already resulted in major revisions to Ukraine's national nursing educational curriculum. This will lead to significant reform in the nursing profession.

The University of Alberta's Faculty of Nursing and Grant MacEwan Community College are the main Canadian partners, and Gerri Nakonechny, Dean of Health and Community Studies at Grant

MacEwan, is the Partners in Health nursing project's coordinator. Third generation Canadian, she is from a Ukrainian background and speaks the language.

She became involved in Partners in Health in 1992, and the following year visited Ukraine with three other people to do an assessment of potential placements. As a result, a number of Canadians were placed for one to three months in Ukraine. Nakonechny herself went to Lviv to assist with curriculum development and implementation.

In early 1994, Partners in Health hosted Dr. Tetyana Chernyshenko, chief specialist with Ukraine's Ministry of Health. Responsible for nursing education in Ukraine, she split her two months in Canada between Edmonton and Ottawa and was keynote speaker at an Edmonton conference attended by 65 Canadians interested in a strategy for training Ukraine's health professionals.

The following year, two nursing professionals from Lviv visited Canada to look at facilities and nursing education.

"We developed a very good relationship, a good trusting relationship," says Nakonechny. "One of the realities of sending over Canadians that speak Ukrainian is that both sides feel very comfortable. It's wonderful to bring the Ukrainians to Edmonton because there are people here who can collaborate with them in their language. They get a great deal of community support."

Nakonechny adds: "Now we actually want to get some content, information and knowledge transferred and we need continuity. That's why we are concentrating on links between institutions."



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Chernivtsi Hospital Unit: Nurse with IV stand.