

IIHA Newsletter

Winter 97-98



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Guest Editor: Andrew Edmondson

PATRICIA COCKRELL AND THE UNICORN OF THE CAUCASUS



In October, Patricia Cockrell set off for the North Caucasus to meet with Fatima Dzutseva, the head of Unicorn, a local organisation involved in healthcare for sufferers from tuberculosis.

In spite of Moscow traffic (or rather Moscow traffic police) problems, misguided taxi drivers and missed trains, she made it to Vladikavkaz only a day late, and met with the flamboyant Fatima. Without even stopping at her accommodation, Patricia was whisked off to the Department of Health, where she met the director and the region's chief TB doctor, who invited her to join their conference.

TB Problems

One of the main problems with any programme involving tuberculosis, apart from the ubiquitous ones of implementation, control and bureaucratic despots, is TB's lack of popularity with international aid agencies, who are not attracted by the prospect of long-term

funding commitment.

TB in Moscow

Although the situation in the North Caucasus has been exacerbated by refugees from war and political repression, it is not limited to this region. There is a similar problem even in the capital, where the migrant population and those in prison are ravaged by TB. Fatima's own husband has recently been released from prison and now suffers from the disease.

Support from authorities

After the conference, Patricia was able to make the acquaintance of Oleg Datiev, who is on the committee of economic policy and as such has direct access to valuable contacts. He was also interested in our other pro-

jects, and particularly by our support from Tacis and as a result is very keen to keep in contact with us.

Underfunded Clinics

Next morning, a visit to the mountains revealed a pulmonary and a children's clinic, but unfortunately neither of them had any dealings with TB patients. As is the case throughout the Former Soviet Union, they are chronically underfunded, with shortages of food and medicine: the patients even bring their own bedlins. The same was true in the specialised TB hospital in the town, but as is equally the case, the doctors are very highly qualified, friendly, hospitable, and concerned with working as best they can, despite the

lack of equipment.

There had also been plans for a meeting with the Médecins sans Frontières, who are also working in the region, but transport problems conspired against this once again, and it never materialised.

The Future with Fatima

Despite all these problems, it emerges that Fatima is very keen to work with IIHA, and is certainly a woman of considerable energy and many ideas for fund-raising: it seems that our only problem will be keeping up with her!

Stop press: as we go to print, we have managed to arrange a second visit to Vladikavkaz by Patricia, who will be accompanied by Dr John Stephen. This will take place in January 1998.

Health of Future Generations:

A report by Simon House on our new project in Ukraine

Our excellent understanding in Ukraine with the Paediatric Institute, which includes Family Planning and Mother and Baby Care, and with two healthy parenting groups, MAMA-86 and Blagodieniste, has led to a Consortium of the three organisations. We have also built a British Consortium of three, IHA, Michael Crawford's Mother and Child Foundation and NICARE, a Northern Ireland Government health organisation which operates internationally.

A question of priorities...

So far the Small Partnership Scheme has resources to fund part of such a project in Ukraine and is eager to do so. We hope in time to mount a larger scale project, but Ukraine has first to include the Health Sector on her priority list, from which it is strangely absent. We shall be focusing not only on young couples but on teenage sexuality prob-

lems and reproductive health education from an early age.

Some supplementary facts

Since we began work in this field large-scale trials in Eastern Europe have established scientifically folic acid as an essential supplement in relation to child-bearing. Similar trials are now needed on specific fatty acids, AA and DHA, which are essential to brain and retinal development. These will extend Michael Crawford's international prize-winning work which focused on the roles of these substances. We hope to mount such trials in Russia. Cow's milk, and therefore milk powder baby foods, with one exception, only contain one-tenth the proportion of DHA of human milk. More forceful evidence is required to induce governments to take the necessary action. Russia includes the Health Sector on her priority list.

More stop press: Mama-86 and Blagodieniste, the Ukrainian charities, have said that they are willing to work in consortia with us on this project. The Institute of Paediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynaecology should be joining in soon. Mama-86 is also interested in trying to change the problem with health priorities.



Dr Tseitlin, Director of the clinic, with some of his patients

Our Man in Moskva

Roy Ridgway braved the Russian winter to attend the annual CF conference in Moscow.

In spite of the Russian winter, Roy Ridgway set off for Moscow, where he was due to attend the annual CF conference. Determined to make as much use as possible of his time, he also followed up other plans he had made anywhere up to a year ago. After a tentative start with the head of the Catholic Apostolic Office in Moscow last year, the administrative director of the Blagocentre said that he was very much in favour of Roy's plans to make it into a centre for family support groups: this would not be limited to CF, but would include facial disfigurements, cardiac problems and cancer.

Good news

At the centre, Roy was able to meet Alfonse Butz, who is the representative of Frau Hertzog, the wife of the President of Germany. He is considering financing a scheme for training specialist nurses as well as making a donation of 43,000 marks for the purchase of drugs for CF children; Frau Hertzog herself has a nephew with CF. The Malteser Hilfsdienst has also expressed an interest in co-

operating with IHA in the new plans. Further to this, Roy was able to bring together the Blagocentre and a Moscow children's cancer hospital, and signed a 'protocol' for co-operation with the Magic Key, an NGO linked to them. This expanded the programme even further: it now includes provision for medical care of street children and those with alcoholic parents.

Bad news

There was some bad news to be had as well: there were rumours that the Ministry of Health will cut the Moscow CF budget to about \$200 per child per year. We hope that this is not the case. After all this, it would be easy to forget the 'real' reason for Roy's visit: the conference. Suffice it to say that it was a success, and that our representative was asked to take the post of co-chair, much to his surprise and honour. After returning from his journey, Roy spent a whole three days in this country before jetting off to the States to take a well-deserved holiday...and to attend another conference!

The key to all ills...

Cancer is a terrible disease bringing intense suffering even from the side-effects of treatment. This can include chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, even amputation, and the isolation that this creates damages the lives of the whole family. There are about 1,000 children in Moscow today that have survived cancer; there are about 10,000 that still suffer from the ill-

ness, which is often considered to be incurable. Magic Key is working in partnership with IHA to bring hope back into the lives of people devastated by childhood cancer. A rehabilitation centre has been set up to the north of Moscow in one of Stalin's country homes, which is situated in woodland with a beautiful lake.



All The Way From: SIBERIA!

IHA invited five CF doctors and the mother of a CF child to come from the depths of Siberia and discover something about treatment of the disease in this country. **Dorothea Ridgway** writes about what they saw and did:

Organising the visit of five doctors and the parent of a CF child seemed like a mammoth task, especially as only one doctor from the Novosibirsk group could speak English. However, Winchester and especially Twyford is awash with Russian speaking residents willing to interpret, as well as genuine Russians living here.

Tour of Duty

In spite of their late arrival, Vitali, a very young professor, Elena and Olga, the doctors from Omsk, set off the next day with Brian Standfield, who worked for WHO, and spent six days with Dr Cogswell in Poole. Here they experienced both his hospital and his hospitality, as he put them up in his farmhouse. Irina, who speaks English, and her senior partner Natalia, stayed with Dr Chris Rolles

in Southampton and with Dr Jenny Tyrell in Bath and were shown around these cities and their hospitals. Natasha, whose daughter has CF, was kindly looked after by Russians in Southampton and Winchester, by Dr Tyrell in Bath, and by Feola Choat in London. Feola took her to visit the CF Trust in Bromley, Kent, as part of her introduction to fund raising and English ways of family support for CF children.

Home again

After tours of Winchester and London, they were put back on the plane for Russia, tired but informed and positive after their fortnight in the UK. Their thanks and ours go out to everyone who helped to make their stay such a success.

Brian Standfield, late of WHO, interpreted for some of the doctors. Here, he gives his impression of the visit.

During their first week in England, the three doctors from Omsk saw various aspects of the work of the Department of Paediatrics at Poole Hospital, Dorset, which serves a largely urban population of nearly half a million. The main object of their visit being to study the management of cystic fibrosis in children, the guests were briefed by Dr Jeremy Cogswell, Consultant Paediatrician at the hospital, and his colleagues. Physiotherapy routines in which the children themselves participate proved to be of special interest.

Teamwork

The Russians were particularly impressed by the close collaboration among the various members of the CF team: hospital consultants and staff, physiotherapist, dietician, and community nurse. They noted

that such conditions would be more difficult to achieve in the vast Omsk region of Siberia, where the population and the corresponding medical facilities were widely scattered, except in the city of Omsk itself (pop. 2 million).

Opera!

The visitors, together with their English interpreter, enjoyed the warm hospitality of Dr Cogswell and his wife at their home in the beautiful Dorset countryside. As part of their ad hoc social programme, they were taken to the ruins of Corfe Castle, strolled along the sea shore, explored the town centre and its many fine shops and - an unexpected bonus - attended a lively performance of "The Gondoliers," staged at the Poole Arts Centre by Bournemouth Operatic Society before a packed audience.



Dr Jenny Tyrell (front) with Natalia and Elena and (back, from left) Molly Worsley, Sue McKechnie and Julia Leigh Smith.

Elisabeth Prickett invited our visitors to the Winchester *Russky Kruzhok*, and got to know them as people.

Despite the harsh conditions in Russia - they had recently been on hunger strike to secure their back pay - the corruption, lethargy and rampant red tape, they were highly professional and intelligent, devoted to their work and their patients, quick to understand and eager to learn. They were also highly

cultured: at the Winchester *kruzhok*, Elena's eyes shone as she discussed the theme ('Dreams in Russian Literature') with the speaker. I have learned that not only does grit produce pearls, but that we should think at least twice before letting any trace of condescension creep in when giving aid to Russians.

New Faces for the New Year: IIHA has three new staff

Carla Howard: apart from 'a smidgen of Russian' she speaks Dutch, French, German and Italian, largely due to having studied modern languages as a mature student and a short spell abroad recently studying for a post-graduate diploma. She works for a Christian bookshop and The Children's Society in Romsey as well as for IIHA, and has two granddaughters (20 months and three) who have made her realise how precious children are to Society as well as to their families.

Debbie Burrows: Finance Manager. Has worked for IIHA for 8 months on a part-time basis while bringing up her young daughter. She came to IIHA from a career as a Chartered Management Accountant mainly working within the food industry. Her main objective has been to introduce monthly management reporting in order to aid decision-making and the planning of future cashflows, as well as dealing with daily financial matters.

Andrew Edmondson: 'jack-of-all-trades.' An old Wykehamist, has just graduated in French and Russian from Oxford University. Jobs include: interpreter, tour guide, computer work, applications... Has spent time in St Petersburg as a teacher of English and a shipbuilder.

Professor Boris Reznik

It is with great regret that IIHA must report the death of Professor Boris Reznik of the Pirogov Institute, Odessa, on Monday 8th December. He was one of our most valued partners in Ukraine, and instrumental in our projects there. He will be sorely missed.



Roy Ridgway and Boris Reznik (centre) meeting Pat Norris, Lady Mayoress, in 1995. Photograph courtesy of the Hampshire Chronicle

The Russians are Here!

The Siberians on St Giles' Hill (see page 3). From left:



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Financial Manager: Debbie Burrows ACMA

Managing Director: Roy Ridgway

Integrated on the Internet!

IIHA has got connected to the World Wide Web. In spite of an office full of technophobes, we have obtained not one, but four pages under the CAF umbrella. Find us at: <http://www.charitynet.org/~IIHA>

While the more traditional among us might throw up their hands in horror, you can't deny the use of the system: there's even an old article by Ben House (from IIHA

News vol.1, no. 1) on the Internet: it's at <http://www.newciv.org/worldtrans/BOV/BI/BI-74.HTML>

The idea is that people rate the value of the project: so far, we're in joint first place with an approval rating of 90%! Nevertheless, we assure you that it's only the computer reality that's virtual: the work we do is as real as ever!