A symposium on "Implementation Science: from Research into Practice" was held on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, as an adjunct session to the Biomedical Center's 16th International Conference "AIDS, Cancer and Public Health." This meeting represented collaborative effort of St. Petersburg partners of the FIC-funded ICHORTA program (International Clinical Operational and Health Services Research and Training Award), and four Fogarty/AITRP programs (New York State, Yale, Emory, and Johns Hopkins). The 46 conference participants included representation from nine US institutions and nine institutions from Russia and the former Soviet Union. Andrei Kozlov, MD, Biomedical Center Director and conference organizer, said that the evaluations for this session were rated among the most favorable of the five day conference.

This symposium, co-chaired by Dale Morse and Jack DeHovitz, was convened to address emerging topics in HIV/TB-related research: the increased availability of ARV, the findings from several local HIV prevention initiatives, and increased interest in the surveillance and control of TB and HCV. By emphasizing "implementation science," conference attendees had the opportunity to discuss operationalizing and evaluating HIV and TB surveillance and care programs and how successful HIV/TB/HCV prevention programs could be developed into public policy. The question and answer sessions promoted spirited debate and discussion on the next steps to take in these important research areas.

Two former Fogarty AITRP trainees (Anneli Uusküla, Estonia - NYS Training Program; Karine Markosyan, Armenia – Emory) shared their implementation science research as a model to potential Fogarty trainees in attendance. The US faculty also included Louise-Ann McNutt, PhD (Albany School of Public Health), Carlos Del Rio, MD (Emory University), Kenrad Nelson, MD (Johns Hopkins University), and Robert Heimer, PhD (Yale University).

The conference also was an opportunity to meet the first crop of graduates from the new MPH program at St. Petersburg State University, another initiative in partnership with FIC. The following day, US faculty took a tour of the Botkin Hospital and the new St. Petersburg AIDS Center, where patients with HIV receive care and ARV treatment. Our Russian hosts at these institutions were enthusiastic about showing their facilities and explaining their HIV patient care systems to the US delegation.
A three-day symposium centering on TB and HIV research in the South Caucasus was convened from November 29 to December 1, 2006 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Dr. DeHovitz from SUNY Downstate and Drs. Dale Morse, Louise Ann McNutt, Monica Parker and Ms. Renee Hallack from Albany collaborated with faculty from US, Georgian, and European partners on two training workshops entitled “Regional Conference on Tuberculosis Control in South Caucasus” and the “TB-HIV Workshop”. This is our second conference in the region, facilitated in collaboration with Emory University and Johns Hopkins University's FIC programs. These workshops included over 50 physicians and researchers from Georgia and Armenia.

In addition, NYS-ITRP faculty had the opportunity meet with institutional representatives who are developing the Georgian School of Public Health at Tbilisi State Medical University. NYS-ITRP faculty also interviewed potential Georgian and Armenian candidates for our US-based training programs.

The goal of the workshops was to teach concepts of operational research/implementation science in TB, HIV, and STD epidemiology and treatment in the South Caucasus countries. The secondary goal was to identify potential collaborations between US and Georgian/Armenian academic research institutions on TB/HIV research projects. These educational efforts also enhanced communication between TB and HIV programs in the South Caucasus region, for the further development country-specific action plans and policy for combating TB and HIV.

The symposium was organized by KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, in collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Emory University International Research Training Programs, NYS-ITRP, and AIDS Foundation East-West.
Dr. Holub is Chair and Associate Professor in the Department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases in the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague. From 2000-2002, he participated in a postdoctoral laboratory training program at the Wadsworth Center at the New York State Department of Health. 1. What motivated you to pursue training through the Fogarty New York State International Training and Research Program? I spent my first clinical training at SUNY Downstate in 1995. I met very nice and enthusiastic people there. When advanced laboratory training through the Fogarty International Center became possible, I decided to apply for it.

2. Can you tell us what you remember about your experience while training? In general, the training program was very well organized including support from the people involved in the coordination of the project. Moreover, I found the environment of the Wadsworth Center, where I spent the most of my time, very friendly and intellectually rich.

3. What is the focus of your current work? How did the Fogarty New York State International Training and Research Program prepare you for what you are doing now? My work focuses on: inpatient and outpatient treatment of infectious diseases, research of immunopathogenesis of sepsis and HIV/AIDS as well as teaching medical students. The training was helpful for my experimental work, teaching of postgraduate students and writing grants and manuscripts, which is now a significant part of my work.

4. Have you been awarded any grants since completing your training? If so, please tell us about them. Upon my return, I received two grants as a principal investigator. The topic of the first one (finished in January 2007) was immunopathogenesis of infectious meningitis. The grant was an extension of the reentry Fogarty-NIH grant. We found interesting data about cortisol levels in cerebrospinal fluid and their correlation with the severity and etiology of meningitis (the data were published in three peer-reviewed journals including Critical Care).

The seminar's four participants, Dr. Nino Lomia (Georgia), Dr. Marina Topuridze (Georgia), Dr. Edgar Manukyan (Armenia), and Dr. Tina Karapetyan (Armenia) were also invited to present information about the situation regarding HIV and other STIs in their respective countries at the weekly Downstate HIV/ID Seminar. The presentations were moderated by Dr. Jack Dehovitz.

Visits to the STAR Health Center provided a unique opportunity to observe clinical practices related to HIV care - a valuable addition to coursework at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health, where the trainees are working towards either M.S in Epidemiology or M.P.H degrees. The knowledge gained during their training in the United States will be applied towards the development of more effective HIV treatment and prevention strategies in their home countries, where many barriers to effective HIV testing and care still exist.

Trainee Spotlight
Michal Holub MD, PhD
(Continued on next page)
5. What was the hardest part about living in Albany? In the Czech Republic?
The hardest part about living in Albany was our health insurance, which was very confusing and last bills I paid four years after my return home, because they were lost by insurance company. Hardest part after my return home was integration into the system as well as incorporation of knowledge and experience obtained during the training to my professional work. It was surprising to see hostile reactions from some colleagues because of some novelties. Fortunately, I had support from my previous boss and the university.

6. What are some of your future plans?
We have applied for a project, which involves the Wadsworth Center, Charles University in Prague and the University of Kentucky. Also, we are now about to begin preparation of a European Union research project, which would include five teams from four different countries. We would like to extend our study of biomarkers of sepsis; however, we are really at the beginning.

Awards Corner
Congratulations to Drs. Anneli Uuskula (University of Tartu), Anjali Sharma, and Jack DeHovitz (SUNY Downstate Medical Center) on their successful application for funding from the REACH Initiative: Research and Education in HIV/AIDS for Resource-Poor Countries. The goal of their research will be to determine if the provision of directly administered antiretroviral therapy to drug users receiving methadone maintenance can improve successful virologic suppression by HAART in Estonia, a country with an injection drug use-driven HIV epidemic. If proven effective, the directly administered antiretroviral therapy model could be applied in other programs that serve HIV-infected persons in methadone treatment in Eastern Europe, as well as in other settings in which drug users are present on a nearly daily basis (including correctional facilities, shelters and day treatment programs). Funded by Tibotec Pharmaceuticals, the REACH Initiative focuses on supporting collaborative projects between organizations in the developed and developing world by providing financial support for HIV/AIDS projects in resource-poor countries.

Congratulations to Fogarty alum Pawel Stefanoff, M.D., Ph.D., M.S (National Institute of Hygiene, Warsaw), who submitted a successful application to the National Institutes of Health/Fogarty International Center Global Research Initiative Program (GRIP). His project, entitled “Study of risk factors of tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) in Poland” will examine the association of factors related to vector tick activity and factors related to the probability of tick/human contact; develop a predictive model of TBE incidence in Poland; and study risk factors for TBE using a case-control design. Dr. Stefanoff’s GRIP award will provide funding through April 2010.

Funding Opportunities
The Fogarty International Research Collaboration Award (FIRCA) provides funds ($100,000 over three years) to foster international research partnerships between NIH-supported US scientists and their collaborators in countries of the developing world. The FIRCA program aims to benefit the research interests of both the US and foreign collaborators while increasing research capacity at the foreign site. All areas of biomedical and behavioral research supported by NIH are eligible FIRCA research topics, except for HIV/AIDS. For more information, visit http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/research_grants/firca/. Submission deadline: September 21 (Behavioral and Social Sciences) or January 21, 2011 and September 21 (Basic and Biomedical Sciences) each year.

The Global Health Research Initiative Program for New Foreign Investigators (GRIP) promotes productive re-entry of NIH-trained foreign investigators into their home countries as part of a broader program to enhance the scientific research infrastructure in developing countries, to stimulate research on a wide variety of high priority health-related issues in these countries, and to advance NIH efforts to address health issues of global import. See http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/research_grants/grip/ for more information. Submission deadlines are: September 21, 2007; September 22, 2008; September 21, 2009 (Behavioral and Social Sciences) or September 21, 2007; September 22, 2008 (Basic and Biomedical Sciences). Submission deadline for AIDS applications: December 18, 2007; December 18, 2008.
New York HIV Research Centers Consortium Meeting!

The fourth annual scientific conference of the New York HIV Research Centers Consortium will take place in New York City on Tuesday, November 27, 2007 and will focus on challenges in care, treatment, and prevention for adults living with HIV. This day-long event will include speakers, workgroups, and a panel discussion with funders. The conference schedule and registration information will be distributed soon. Please save the date!

Welcome New & Returning Trainees!

Alexey Kruk, M D, M Sc joins us from Moscow, Russia, where he has been working as a researcher and educator in the Department of Health Management and Social Hygiene in the Medical Department at the Peoples’ Friendship University of Russia. He simultaneously served as an HIV-treatment and health care advisor with AIDS Foundation East West (AFEW), where he also coordinated and managed health-promotion projects in Russian prisons. Alexey will begin the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health in Fall 2007.

Ekaterine Pestvenidze, M D is a pediatrician from Kutaisi, Republic of Georgia, who has served as a Clinical Officer with the JSI Research and Training Institute’s Healthy Women in Georgia Program. As one of her responsibilities at JSI, she has managed the reproductive health education activities for the HWG Program, including HIV/STI education. Eka will begin the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health in Fall 2007.

Yeghishe Nazinyan, M D, PhD joins us from the Department of Epidemiology at Yerevan State Medical University in Yerevan, Armenia. He is currently conducting research about drug resistance in Armenia with emphasis on MRSA epidemiology. Yeghishe will begin the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health in Fall 2007.

Edgar Manukyan, M D, a returning Fogarty fellow, joins us from the Department of Dermatology, STI and Cosmetology at Yerevan State Medical University. During the summer, he has conducted research on questionnaires delivered to practitioners during STI trainings in Armenia. He will be completing the second year of the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health.

Marina Topuridze, M D is a returning Fogarty fellow from Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Marina’s summer research has focused on factors affecting HBV vaccination acceptance among health care workers in Georgia. She will be completing the second year of the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health.

Tina Karapetyan, M D, a returning Fogarty fellow, joins us from the Department of Epidemiology at Yerevan State Medical University. Tina’s summer research has focused on nosocomial infections in Yerevan. She will be completing the second year of the M S in Epidemiology program at the SUNY-Albany School of Public Health.

Nikoloz Chkhartishvili, M D, a returning Fogarty fellow, hails from the Infectious Diseases, AIDS and Clinical Immunology Research Center in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. During the summer, he has conducted research on risk factors for HIV transmission among women in Georgia. He will be completing the second year of the M S in Epidemiology program at SUNY-Albany School of Public Health.

Roena Sukiashevili, M S is a returning Fogarty fellow from the REA Rehabilitation Center in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Roena will be continuing her training at the Wadsworth Center at the New York State Department of Health, where she is focusing on molecular methods in HIV/Hepatitis C.

Lela Dzigua, M S is a returning Fogarty fellow from the Virology Laboratory of the AIDS, Infectious Disease and Clinical Immunology Research Center in Tbilisi, Republic of Georgia. Lela will be continuing her training in the Encephalitis Laboratory at the Wadsworth Center at the New York State Department of Health.


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