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KAZAKHSTAN

SUCCESS STORY

New Methods Keep the Disease at Bay

Earlier diagnostics helps save human lives



*Dr. Serik Shuakbaev trains other doctors to measure blood pressure during a seminar on hypertension Clinical Practice Guidelines.
Photo: Abt Associates*

The USAID ZdravPlus project is working to reduce cardiovascular disease through the introduction of evidence-based guidance on the diagnostics and treatment of the disease.

Twenty-five to thirty percent of adults worldwide are estimated to be affected by hypertension, a “silent killer” that is frequently asymptomatic until a heart attack or stroke occurs. In Kazakhstan, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in adults. To reverse this alarming trend, USAID, through its ZdravPlus project, has been collaborating with health departments, state institutes, and other organizations. To improve the diagnosis and treatment of this important disease at the primary health care level, the project began piloting the use of a new clinical practice guideline on hypertension in six outpatient facilities in the city of Karaganda in 2005.

The first priority was to train doctors in the standards set forth in the clinical practice guideline, which provides comprehensive, evidence-based guidance on how to diagnose and treat hypertension. A total of 439 doctors and 61 nurses have participated in the hypertension training module since the pilot in Karaganda began. The new techniques include the use of the Health Information System data and monthly patient chart reviews that facilitate the detection of hypertension among patients.

“By implementing the clinical practice guideline, we have greatly improved the quality of care we provide to our clients,” says Dr. Serik Shuakbaev, one of the specialists trained on hypertension diagnostics and treatment through the USAID project. “We have also trained nurses and strengthened their ability to provide blood pressure measurements for all adults who come to the facility,” he adds.

Today 81 percent of patients in USAID-supported health facilities receive blood pressure measurements at least once per year. The pilot facilities also educate patients about their disease and the necessary changes in lifestyle to keep the blood pressure from rising beyond normal limits. By making informed decisions about diet and exercise and consistently adhering to the medical treatment prescribed by their doctor, patients can be healthy for life.