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**UZBEKISTAN**

## FIRST PERSON

# Better Services for HIV and TB Patients

### Health care workers team up to treat HIV and TB together



Photo: Umid Asamidinov

*Irina Brusnetsova, above right, counsels a patient about TB.*

***“The USAID training for health providers allowed me to look at the problems of people living with HIV from a different angle.”***

–Irina M. Brusnetsova,  
Head of Tashkent  
Tuberculosis Dispensary

Irina Brusnetsova, Director of the Tashkent Tuberculosis Dispensary, has more than 29 years of experience working with tuberculosis (TB) patients. However, she rarely coordinated with other health care clinics that provide broader services for her patients, and she did not have access to information about HIV or other health issues beyond TB to share with her patients.

That changed when Irina participated in a USAID-funded training for health care providers on the importance of treating HIV and TB co-infection. At the training, health care workers learned more about HIV, TB/HIV co-infection, and the importance of adhering to treatment. Worldwide, TB is the leading cause of death for people with HIV. In Uzbekistan, co-infection is a serious public health threat as the country has the highest rates of HIV/AIDs and drug-resistant TB in the region.

“Before this training, when I encountered patients with HIV/TB co-infection, I didn’t pay much attention to collaboration with HIV services. Usually, I would refer patients who complained of coughing, fever, weight loss, and sweating to the AIDS Center. Now, I understand how important it is to combine HIV and TB services together. By working together it’s possible to overcome multi-drug resistant TB.”

This training has resulted in positive change in patients’ lives. “I remember one patient, Svetlana, a 30-year old woman who came to me with TB symptoms. She was diagnosed with pulmonary TB and HIV. She received a complete course of treatment for TB and started anti-retroviral therapy for HIV. Now, she is in constant touch with me. She has a great interest in helping others overcome TB. She regularly encourages and leads people from her community to be tested for TB and to complete treatment.”

Irina has new hope when treating her patients. “I now provide confidential counseling to patients on HIV and TB treatment adherence, and I also help them to adopt a positive attitude toward life. Indeed, while receiving anti-retroviral therapy and TB treatment, it’s possible to live an ordinary life, to work, and be with family.”