

Improving Maternal and Infant Care in Russia

Challenge

After a decade of restructuring the health sector, women and infants in Russia still face serious health issues. Women do not regularly receive family planning information as part of post-natal care. Husbands, partners and families were not routinely encouraged to participate in the birthing process. Breast feeding was not very common and doctors did not promote the practice despite evidence of the benefits. Hospitals spent thousands each year on formula for newborns. The delivery rooms were gloomy and run-down.



Photo: John Snow Inc.

A Russian girl meets her newborn brother as part of Velikiy Novgorod hospital's family centered maternity care program.

"I have been practicing [medicine] for 22 years already, but the USAID project changed my life completely... I cannot understand why I practiced in that old way."

- Manzhai V.N., Chief physician, Berezniki Maternity Hospital

Results

USAID's program was enthusiastically received by patients and the local medical community. At the project sites, breastfeeding increased by more than 50%, women were 40% more likely to want family participation in the birthing process, and repeat abortion rates were reduced significantly. The international community recognized WIN's success and four maternity hospitals have been certified as "UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospitals." WIN activities have allowed hospitals to save money, which has been used for upgrading and renovating delivery rooms.

WIN-trained obstetricians shared their knowledge at conferences and nearly forty additional regions applied for training in their communities. A program is underway with the Russian Society for Obstetrics and Gynecology to incorporate WIN methods into medical school curriculum and to continue this care for newborns and their mothers.

Initiative

USAID sponsored Women and Infant Health (WIN), initially introduced in twenty hospitals throughout Russian regions, to improve maternal and child care by counseling patients, training staff, and involving the family and larger community.

The WIN program introduces evidence-based and client-centered practices through trained staff in hospitals and clinics. For maximum success, the program targeted three groups – mothers, doctors and hospital administrators.

The program provided mothers with counseling on breast feeding and modern family planning methods. Doctors were introduced to successful Russian-based medical procedures and encouraged to share information through peer to peer training. Hospital administrators learned that using fewer, more efficient drugs and reducing formula consumption could result in significant budget savings.