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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TURKMENISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Cooperation Guarantees Better Care

USAID's program links family physicians with laboratory specialists for better health care results



During the joint laboratory and primary health care training course in hematology. Photo: Abt Associates

Family physicians and laboratory physicians are working together to diagnose anemia more effectively and to ensure that patients receive the care they need to improve their condition.

Saodat Romanova – a laboratory physician at House of Health #5 in Turkmenabat, recalls how just recently, her diagnostic skills have reversed an erroneous and alarming diagnosis. A six-year-old boy from Lebap Velayat, Turkmenistan, was recently taken to his family physician by his parents, who were concerned by their son's lack of appetite and lethargic behavior. After being referred to a specialist for consultation, his parents were shocked when they were told by oncologists that their son had leukemia. Distraught, they sought a second opinion from doctor Romanova, who was able to give his parents much better news. After reevaluating the laboratory tests, Ms. Romanova determined that the boy was indeed sick. However, his lethargy and lack of appetite were the result of anemia, a relatively common and easily treatable condition.

Ms. Romanova credits her success to a training course on hematology that the USAID ZdravPlus Project organizes for laboratory and family physicians throughout Turkmenistan. The USAID project has been working since 2002 to strengthen the capacity of laboratory workers in Turkmenistan's health care system. Additionally, the project has been working to strengthen the link between laboratory and family physicians. A viable cooperation between these two groups of health care providers helps ensure that family physicians order the right laboratory tests, make correct diagnoses, and prescribe the most appropriate treatment.

The ZdravPlus training module emphasizes the relationship between family physicians and laboratory specialists, with a focus on how the two groups should work together to ensure that appropriate blood tests are performed and interpreted correctly. The process promotes a better understanding of the complementary role that doctors and laboratory technicians play in the health care system. Because both groups are able to put their new skills into practice in a mutually supportive fashion, careful laboratory analysis, and evidence-based diagnosis and treatment are now linked, ensuring better health outcomes for all.