

## Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2011

*Annette Katrava and project team members and  
Dr Snezana Manic and Accreditation Agency team*



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AGENCY FOR  
ACCREDITATION  
OF HEALTH CARE  
INSTITUTIONS  
OF SERBIA



Republic of Serbia  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

## In this issue :

**Accreditation visits to Pilot Health Care Institutions by External Surveyors completed**

**External surveyors awarded certificates**

**Workshop on Future Directions of Health Technology Assessment and Clinical Practice Guidelines in Serbia**



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Agency for Accreditation of Health  
Care Institutions of Serbia



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### 2010 a Year of Accomplishments

- ➔ The Agency for Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions in Serbia (AZUS) is already operational and the necessary organizational and managerial arrangements have been established. The necessary legislative changes were drafted and hopefully will be approved in the next period, thus introducing mandatory certification of the health institutions and making Agency responsible for the continuous quality improvement (CQI) also. The Agency and the project, together with the relevant stakeholders, developed and are currently testing and evaluating technical solutions for the accreditation process and the necessary skills and capacities for external evaluation and self-assessment of the CQI inside the pilot institutions.
- ➔ A six week 11 modules training programme on continuous quality improvement (accredited by the Serbian Health Council) had been repeated twice, covering 100 surveyors from September-October 2010. Certificate event ceremony was held in Belgrade in November.
- ➔ The Core Quality Indicators have been reviewed in collaboration with 37 pilot institutions (27 PHC and 10 hospitals) and the respective Workshop was organized in order to set up measurable targets for those indicators. At the same time the established standards (proposed national accreditation programme) are being tested in 7 public and 3 private health institutions. Five sets of standards have been created - for the PHC, Secondary, and

Tertiary, pharmacies, laboratories and radiology (the last one still being developed). At the same time also the Guidelines for Self-assessment and External-assessment have been finalized and the Agency Internal Procedural manual is drafted. The project helped creating the Business Plan and the drafting of the three years Strategic Plan for the Agency, soon to be finalized.

- ➔ The project supports the Agency in preparations for the testing of accreditation process as well as the certification process and as a part of this the patient safety; clinical practice guidelines and health technology assessment are currently in the focus. The legislative changes were drafted, accepted by the MoH but still awaiting the approval by the Parliament. The project closely cooperates with the World Bank (WB) "Delivery of Improved Local Services (DILS)" and "Serbia Health Project-Additional Financing", which currently support 33 PHC institutions and 13 hospitals in different aspects including CQI and accreditation.
- ➔ The role of Agency in support of the CQI is already evident but will become even more prominent in the future. The project helped to significantly increase the awareness among different stakeholders addressing the importance of ensuring continuous quality improvement and related accreditation in the health sector. The MoH decided to introduce the mandatory certification of the health institutions as part of the legislative changes. As a result of the project activities and the efforts invested by the Agency the interest of different healthcare institutions for participating in the project activities increased.

### Accreditation visits to Pilot Health Care Institutions by External Surveyors completed

After the Certificate Award Ceremony, which marked the completion of training for external surveyors in the process of accreditation of health care institutions, teams of external surveyors departed on pilot accreditation visits to health care institutions involved in the Project.

At the end of November and during December 2010, teams of external surveyors, which have been accredited by the Agency for Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions in Serbia, visited DZ Leskovac, Subotica Pharmacy, General Hospital Zrenjanin and DZ Kragujevac. During December, they also made accreditation visits to the regional General Hospital in Uzice, and the following private health care institutions: pharmacy Farmanea, Health Center Dr. Ristic, laboratory Biomedika and General Hospital Belmedic.

Dr. Vesna Vujcic, an external surveyor from DZ Zemun reported that the accreditation visit to DZ Leskovac lasted from November 28 to December 2, 2010. The external committee consisted of two doctors, a

nurse and a lawyer. "We divided into two teams. The first team evaluated the Department of General Practice, Women's Health, the multi-community health and the environment. The other team evaluated the Health Protection of Children, X-ray diagnostics, laboratory diagnostics and Health Station Brestovac. The teams jointly evaluated human resources, information management, leadership and management and participated in meeting with focus groups of patients from the local community and employees," explained Dr. Vujcic.





She explained that the scoring was done according to the accreditation criteria, ranging from 1 to 5 and stressed that the report was made by consensus of the commission. The position of the Committee is that in DZ Leskovac there are good conditions for work, both in terms of space and technical equipment. "It is important to stress that the quality of service that patients receive in Health Station Brestovac is no different to the quality of service that patients receive in the central building. The organization of work and service provided is satisfactory, while the atmosphere in the health care center gives the impression of good interpersonal relations. Hygiene is also satisfactory. The employees also did their best to fully prepare extensive documentation which was neatly arranged and full of content, which proves that they have taken their obligations in the accreditation process seriously", said Dr. Vujicic.



Dr. Vujicic concluded that the Commission noted, during conversations with the self-assessment teams, documentation reviews and visits of the facilities, the efforts DZ Leskovac has invested in continuous quality improvement, patient safety and staff safety, as well as efforts to implement reforms in primary health care.

Ms. Jasmina Peulja Vukobratovic, from DZ Novi Sad, had the following to say about her accreditation visits: "I had the great pleasure to be the team leader during the external surveyor visits of institutions, which are not only different in the type of health care they provide, but also in their founding – a state-owned pharmacy Subotica and a private hospital Belmedic. I also had two different teams, which in a short time, functioned as if we have collaborating for years".

Ms. Vukobratovic said that "the experiences we gained, in preparing our health care institutions during the accreditation process, external evaluation in 2008, the training in 2010 and the necessary preparations before leaving for the visits, ensured that these four days were collegial visits, primarily to be of as-

sistance to the institution, but also an award and recognition for all the hard work that went into it." The impression of the team, after these two visits, was that preparation for accreditation for a health care institution primarily means building team work and ensuring that all the employees feel like promoters of quality.

She went on to comment that the obligations of an external surveyor during an accreditation visit are numerous, from the review of documentation, discussions with employees, focus groups, visiting the institutions, etc and that she sincerely hoped that in time, the surveyors will acquire the necessary experience to unify the criteria of external and self-assessment of the institution. She concluded that "the accreditation report seems to me the most sensitive part of the process, because it needs to steer the health care institution toward further efforts in improving quality, and in this area, the expert support from the Agency will be of great assistance."

### External surveyors awarded certificates

On the occasion of the end of training for external surveyors, a Certificate Award Ceremony was held in Belgrade on November 24, 2010. As part of the Project activities, during the period August 30th – October 16th 2010, training was held for nearly 100 healthcare professionals who are now qualified to work as external surveyors according to the Agency for Accreditation of Healthcare Institutions in Serbia (AZUS) Act for the upcoming accreditation of health care institutions in Serbia. The training was organized by AZUS in cooperation with the Medical Faculty – The School of Public Medicine, with the support of the Project.



Prior to the Certificate Award Ceremony, Prof dr Tomica Milosavljevic, Minister of Health, stated that accreditation of healthcare institutions and licensing of healthcare professionals individually are two pillars of improving the quality of the healthcare system in Serbia, through an improved level of patient safety and overall effectiveness of the system. He said that it is for this reason that an Agency such as AZUS



was established, modeled on the most successful ones in Europe, one of its principal goals being „clean and safe hospitals.“



Dr. Perisa Simonovic, State Secretary, Ministry of Health, Prof. dr. Vladimir Bumbasirevic, Dean of Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Mr. Andrew Headey, Head of Operations Section III, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia, and Ms. Annette Katrava, Team Leader, Health Accreditation Expert, EPOS and Dr. Snezana Manic, Director of AZUS addressed the surveyors during the ceremony.

Mr. Andrew Headey, Head of Operations Section III, Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Serbia stated that access to high quality healthcare is a key human right recognized and valued by the European Union, its Institutions and the citizens of Europe and accordingly, patients have a right to expect that every effort is made to ensure their safety as users of all health services. He continued that harmonization with EU regulations related to the health care quality and patients' safety is one of the objectives of accreditation and mandatory certification in Serbia and compliance with a

number of the EU regulations.

Mr. Headey noted that in order for the Agency to successfully and credibly perform its responsibilities, the Project has paid great attention to the training of healthcare professionals in the area of continuous quality improvement and patient safety, and that AZUS now has a pool of trained external surveyors to conduct Accreditation Survey Visits in Health care Institutions, which is of vital significance for the execution of accreditation.

Dr. Snezana Manic, Director of AZUS awarded the certificates to doctors, nurses, lawyers and economists employed in healthcare institutions, who have received the skills and knowledge to evaluate the quality of work in an institution through the training process, so as to improve the quality of healthcare and patient safety in Serbia. She assessed that accreditation is the best method by which to improve quality and increase patient safety, who will receive safer and better care, for the mutual benefit of both the patients and healthcare workers.

She stressed that, according to the Law on Healthcare, accreditation is voluntary, but that it is being considered to introduce a mandatory certification so that all institutions would be obliged to fulfill a minimum standard of quality and safety. Dr. Manic congratulated the external surveyors, thanked the professors who took part in the training, the Faculty of Medicine for their support, and the Project team for their cooperation.

Annette Katrava, Team Leader of the Project, added that it is thanks to the cooperation with AZUS that these courses for external surveyors were held successfully, and that they will help improve the quality of healthcare in Serbia. She stressed the importance of these courses and wished the external surveyors, who will start their pilot testing of institutions at the end of November, good luck in their work.





### Workshop on Future Directions of Health Technology Assessment and Clinical Practice Guidelines in Serbia

The “Future Directions of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) and Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) in Serbia” workshop was organized by the Project, and held in Hotel M in Belgrade on November 3rd, 2010. The principal aim of this workshop was to establish a framework for national HTA strategy in Serbia. The workshop was attended by members of the various Ministry of Health bodies: the HTA Commission, the CPG Commission and the Quality Commission, as well as representatives World Bank Project PCU, the Agency Board of Directors, principal staff of the Agency responsible for clinical practice guidelines and clinical pathways and Project experts and staff.



Ms. Annette Katrava, Project Team Leader/Health Accreditation Expert, EPOS gave the welcoming remarks and presented the objectives of the workshop and the “Organization of HTA in Transitional Economy Countries”. She stated that problems of efficacy, effectiveness and safety are very similar in transitional economy countries and stressed that local capacity is the key to bridge science with decision-making concerning the adoption of new health technology. Furthermore, costs and cost-effectiveness have driven the evaluation of health care technologies in Europe since the 1970’s, and the late 1980’s and 1990’s can be described as the era of institutionalization of HTA in Europe.

Dr Snezana Manic, Director of AZUS, then presented on “Accreditation and Clinical Practice”. She stated that the Agency has a great need for the development of clinical practice and usage of clinical pathways and that implementation of CGPs was a prerequisite for

compliance with standards demands.

Dr Charles Shaw, Accreditation Programme Expert, EPOS discussed the application of clinical guidelines in his presentation “Connecting the improvement plan for Serbia”. He stressed that it was necessary to integrate standards, measurements and action, with an active coordination and management of the implementation. He stated many fragments of a quality system have been developed independently in Serbia by MoH institutes, commissions and international donors. The vision of the national quality policy was to integrate a system of standards, measurement and improvement; policy cannot achieve this without including clinical practice and without an effective management system for coordinated implementation. Dr Shaw concluded that there was a need for a comprehensive quality policy, especially for clinical practice, as well as a need to actively involve all contributing organisations, including the international community.

Dr Dragana Atanasijevic, Consultant for HTA, Coordinator for Quality Component, Ministry of Health DILS/SHPAF Projects gave a brief overview of development of HTA and CPGs in Serbia. She explained that introducing health technology assessment according to a common and generally accepted methodology is unavoidable and that Serbia should establish a mixed model of an HTA institution focussing on the “light model” (checking quality and adaptation of the HTA report) since it is a less expensive option which is better suited to the needs of informed decision-making compared to limited funds that would be allocated for HTA.

The participants then had a group work session during which they filled a “Future Directions Questionnaire” which is the framework for HTA national strategy, which was followed by a discussion with feedback from the group work.

The overall conclusion was that there are different levels of understanding of the existence and potentials of HTA in Serbia, as reported by the group work. To establish an HTA program in Serbia, increased awareness is needed for a coherent and effective health policy structure – regulation, payment, etc. Building on the results of this workshop, the project will organize a follow-up workshop to present a proposed framework for a national HTA strategy in Serbia.

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