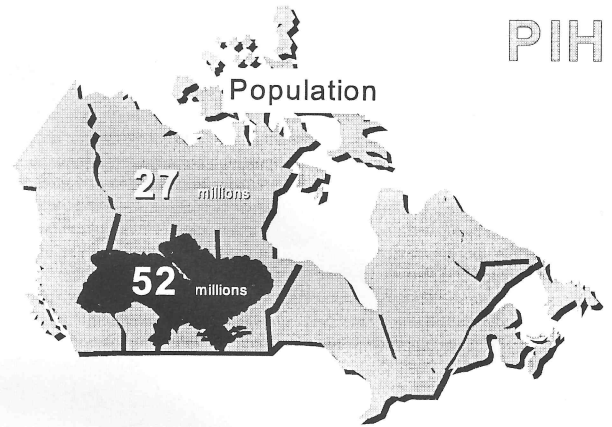




VISION OF A NEW HEALTH SYSTEM FOR UKRAINE



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When Ukraine attained its independence in 1991, it joined the world community and took its place as one of the largest countries in Europe, the 22nd largest in the world, with a population of 52 million. If one were to move Ukraine and place it longitudinally in Canada, it would coincidentally fit precisely where most immigrants from Ukraine to Canada settled in the early part of this century (see Fig.1).

Like other Soviet successor states, Ukraine is undergoing an uncharted transition, simultaneously being forced to reinvent its political, social, and economic structures. The scale and pace of this transition are completely unprecedented in human history and boggle the most sophisticated mind, while wreaking havoc on the totally unprepared population which has found itself living this incredible experiment.

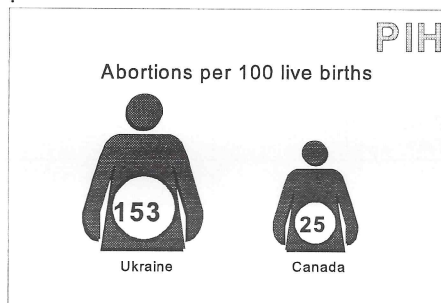
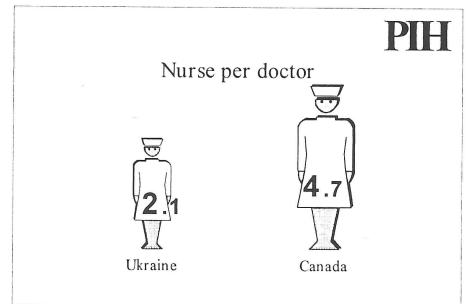
In any transitional period, health is always particularly at risk. The faltering steps to a market economy have resulted in sharp falls in income. This in turn has led to a deterioration in diet and, consequently, nutritional deficits, possibly reduced immunity to infection, and ultimately a population which is more vulnerable to sickness and disease.

These problems are further compounded by "transitional" social insecurity and feelings of helplessness which surface in health problems of a socio-psychological nature. Social stress and lifestyle degradation contribute to an increase in heart disease,

hypertension, ulcers, and other noncommunicable diseases.

In addition to Chernobyl, the legacy of the Soviet Union has left Ukraine with a plethora of other environmental problems to bear. Industrial areas suffer from high levels of air and water pollution with resulting health-related problems. The infrastructure, such as the public water systems, are in a state of neglect, with disasters such as the breakage of the water filtration system in Kharkiv in June 1995, which resulted in sewage flowing into the city water system and the emergence of cholera.

Ukraine Partners Program (New CUPP), began in early January 1996. The Partners in Health sector of the Ukraine program has been managed by the Canadian Society for



The overall demographic trends show population growth per 1000 population hovers in the vicinity of -2 (negative 2) as compared to Canada's 6.6, with many people deciding they do not want to bring children into the world when life is so difficult. An extended trend of more coffins than cribs is a foreboding indicator.

With the collapse of the FSU and exposure of the weaknesses in the neglected health infrastructure, Ukraine has recognized the necessity to develop an effective health policy as well as an institutional and delivery framework to meet the country's health needs. Precisely because of its reputation in health administration and delivery, Canada was approached for support in these areas.

The current phase of the Partners in Health (PIH), funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and under the umbrella of the New Canada-

International Health (CSIH) since it started in 1994. At its inception in the 1970's, CSIH focused on tropical and travel medicine, but has since widened its mandate and is now committed to the promotion of international health and development through advocacy, research, education, and service activities among Canadians. CSIH members includes over 900 health professionals with extensive experience in planning, implementing, and ensuring the sustainability of changes aimed at improving the delivery of health services and the overall structure of health systems.

The initial Partners in Health (Ukraine) program covered two phases, which together lasted almost three years. During the first phase, Canadian health professionals were placed in Ukraine to encourage the development of linkages.

These partnerships between Canadian and Ukrainian institutions were strengthened during the second phase, which involved not only the placement of 44 Canadians in Ukraine, but also 24 Ukrainians in Canada. Altogether, the program encompassed 17 projects.

The current stage of the PIH Program is building on the knowledge and experience gained during the past phases, and is now taking the form of true technical cooperation.

