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Canadian delegation at orientation prior to attending Nursing Conference in Ukraine. Centre front: Paulette Schatz (PIH Program Manager); back row, 5th from left: Gerri Nakonechny, Nursing Program Coordinator.

In May 1995, Nakonechny was back in Ukraine with a colleague to assist in planning the first nursing conference at the request of the Ukrainians. The conference, held last September in Chernivtsi, was attended by eight Canadians. All were nurses or educators, with representatives from the Canadian Nurses Association, McMaster University, the University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing, and Grant MacEwan Community College. More than 400 Ukrainian nursing representatives attended the conference, and more than 200 were at a workshop held afterwards in Vinnytsia.

"The objective of the conference was to bring nurses together for the very first time in the hope that they could come up with recommendations to address the issues facing nurses in Ukraine," says Nakonechny. "It was an enormous task, but by

the end of the conference they had come up with 12 specific recommendations."

During the program's third phase, Canadian nursing specialists in psychiatry, obstetrics, program management and nursing education will visit Ukraine, and nursing leaders from Ukraine will visit Canada. Camille Romaniuk, a psychiatric nurse from Edmonton, has already spent two

weeks giving a seminar in Ukraine, and three Ukrainian specialists -- including Dr. Chernyshenko on a return visit -- spent three weeks in Edmonton and Ottawa in April. The two other specialists were Dr. Volodymyr Tarasiuk, director of Cherkasy Medical College, and Dr. Inna Hubenko, director of Vinnytsia Medical College.

Particularly interested in the Canadian system of nursing education, they were given an overview of the educational system, visited nursing schools involved in undergraduate and higher education of nurses, and were shown a range of community nursing placements. They also spent time in Ottawa, meeting with the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA), Health Canada, and the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing (CAUSN).

"Even though the program was short, it was well-planned so that we had a chance to learn about the university school of nursing system and also to see medical colleges and nursing departments," said Dr. Chernyshenko at the end of the visit. "We were able to familiarize ourselves with the practical aspects of the nursing education system and the activities of the national nursing association on the federal and provincial levels. We also visited Health Canada to become familiar with the strategy of policy development, and we were at hospitals."

The delegation was shown the different levels of nursing education in Canada. "This was very

important to us since in Ukraine we only recently started a bachelor's program and we have no graduates yet," Dr. Chernyshenko explained. "We don't have a master's or doctorate program at the moment." Whereas nurses in Ukraine have historically been viewed as physicians' assistants, nursing in Canada is a separate, distinct profession. "As a result of the visit, we hope to broaden our links with Canadian institutions."

She admitted it will not be easy to "re-orient the public perception of nurses in Ukraine" and implement a new approach to the profession. "However, we realize that everything begins with education and we have to implement a good educational system to produce qualified nurses in order to begin the process of change."

Intense work is now underway in Ukraine to create a national nursing association, and Ukraine's health ministry is planning to conduct workshops and seminars on nursing education and will be inviting Canadian specialists to participate, Dr. Chernyshenko added.

The Ukrainians are not expected to replicate Canadian nursing programs. "They can't depend on any one country for their resources, nor should they," says Nakonechny. "They should take the best of what is available. There are other countries doing a lot of work in the health area. Our role is to ensure that they are familiar with what we are doing and offer our assistance. But the choice is really theirs."

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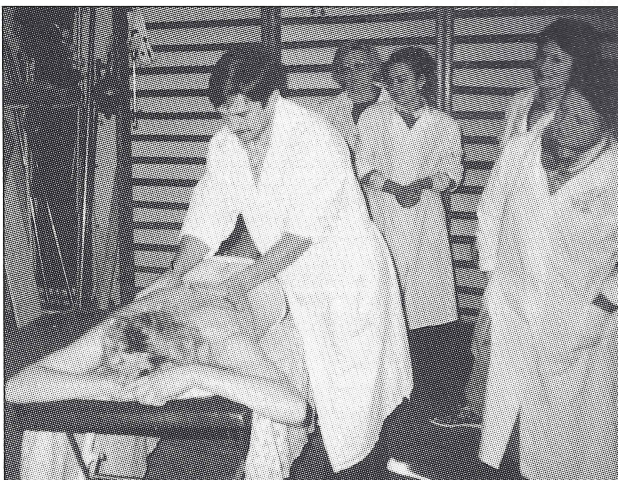
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