

**ICD Fellow and Chairman of Denplan, Dr. David Phillips, reports on an  
ICD-sponsored visit to The Russian Dental Association Meeting  
Moscow 23rd - 27th April 2001**

The International College of Dentists sponsored the visit through the good offices of George Read -Ward, the Secretary General, European section, and I am most grateful to the ICD for so generously providing the funds to allow me to make the visit. The visit was organised by Dr Gennady Pakhomov, WHO Oral Health Programme, Geneva. The background information and quality of the briefing he so kindly afforded me allowed me to prepare effectively for both the lecture and the meetings.

**The Purpose of the Visit**

The purpose of the visit was to explore where the Russian Dental Association, the dental profession generally and the government, together with insurance companies, visualise the present situation in relation to the provision of indemnity, insurance and advice for the dentists practising in Russia. My brief also covered a discussion on the future provision of indemnity cover and insurance in relation to malpractice.

I was provided with the services of an interpreter, Ekaterina Fabrikant, who helpfully was also dentally qualified. She proved to be totally invaluable in the lectures, meetings and other free time when I was in Moscow.

**The Meeting**

The meeting was held in a Conference Centre It was well attended although it was noticeable that most of the audience was female which underlines the fact that about 90 per cent of dentists in the Russian Dental Association are female

My lecture was scheduled for 2pm. Thus I had the opportunity of listening to the morning speakers with the benefit of continuous translation from Kate. It was very clear that the whole concept of the consumer having a voice in health care in Russia was relatively recent. Patient claims are in their infancy and knowledge of how to deal with them scant. It was stated that less than one per cent of the dentists involved in the Russian Dental Association took advantage of insurance against malpractice. This appeared to be provided on a 50/50 basis through an insurance company and from funding through the Government. There also is an insurance broker actively interested in promoting this product.

**The Present Situation**

The Russian Dental Association has formed a committee to deal with the clinical and professional aspects of any claim and this seemed to be based *on* a concept, which revolved around the term 'forensic'. Professors from university departments seemed to be centrally involved in attempting to come to terms with clinically determining the appropriateness of the claims and assessing the quantum

It was also clear that, in parallel with other countries throughout the world, the consumer is beginning to exert a very real influence in relation to the delivery of health care. It was

therefore made clear, especially during the morning session, that more emphasis should be given to the proper management of claims in an effort to resolve them speedily in the best interests of both the practitioner and the patient.

My lecture was the only one throughout the day which involved any clinical slides as opposed to written overheads. Thus the audience, which comprised mainly general practitioners, who worked part or predominantly part of their practising life in private practice, were able to buy into the principles of risk-management by visual means. They accepted that allegations of negligence may be made against a practitioner, without them necessarily being proved at a later date. They readily took the implication that some risk management principles relate to methods of avoiding the escalation of complaints, and how easily some complaints, if unresolved, lead to claims and resultant problems for the practitioner.

The lecture seemed to be well received. The Russian dentists quickly identified with the sorts of claims that occurred around the world within the practice of their profession.

I was then able to listen to the rest of the afternoon's lectures. This gave me further insight into both the clinical and medico-legal situation within the practice of dentistry in Russia.

### **Discussions with the Russian Dental Association, the Insurance Company and Brokers**

The knowledge that I gained from the whole day put me in a very good position to discuss the provision of insurance for dentists in the meetings with representatives of both the Russian Dental Association (in the form of the President) and members of both the insurance company involved and the brokers who were selling the indemnity cover. Everybody present at subsequent meetings had listened to the translation of my lecture, and this proved to be a framework and basis for discussion for the future.

It was clear to me that the insurance company, which was 50 per cent privately funded and 50 per cent owned by the government, had developed a very reasonable product which was being sold by the broker. The penetration into the dental market seemed to be around one per cent only and clearly there is a long way to go to establish a sound scheme. So, though the cost was not great, the need for protection for the dentist and patient was clearly not understood

The problem is also not only the low-level take up of indemnity cover, but a lack of local medico-legal expertise as well. It would seem to be important therefore to concentrate any future ICD activity and funding on the provision of means whereby we could train local dentists in medico-legal expertise in this rather narrow specialised field of dental practice.

### **Future Options**

The following options were discussed:

1. Training local dentists from Russia in the UK and funding their stay and course fees.
2. Bringing experts from the UK to organise key courses in main Russian centres so that these experts could then be in a position to train others locally.

The second option seemed clearly the most cost effective. Funding the project will almost certainly have to involve the WHO

I hope that this project will come to fruition since I feel it would be a very effective use of resources to help the Russian Dental Association at a time when consumer pressure is a clearly emerging factor in the country. With prompt help we could perhaps prevent the escalation of claims we have seen in most other countries in the Western world.

**Dr. David Phillips**  
**OBE, BDS, FDSRCS, FICD**

Dr David Phillips OBE BDS FDSRCS FICD

Former general dental practitioner for 16 years, previously the Director of Dental Protection and subsequently an international consultant specialising in Australia/Australasian claims. Lecturer in medico-legal matters. Former special adviser to the Parliamentary Health Select Committee. Currently chairman of Denplan and other high profile organisations in the United Kingdom .