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## SUCCESS STORY

### Clinical Guidelines Help Improve Health Care for TB



*The Technical Working Group meets regularly to develop Clinical Practice Guidelines for TB Prevention and Treatment*

Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) are the documents that guide decisions and criteria regarding diagnosis, management, and treatment in various health care areas. Development of CPGs allows services provided by health providers to be standardized and helps doctors to follow the most up-to-date approaches in medicine.

Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease where following standardized treatment is vitally important. World Health Organization (WHO) requirements in this regard are quite strict. Until recently in Azerbaijan, standard guidelines for TB treatment did not exist. This made life quite difficult for both TB specialists and primary health care (PHC) providers, who were involved in treatment and management of TB cases.

The USAID-funded Primary Health Care Strengthening (PHCS) Project decided to get involved in the development of TB-related CPGs. The Project has been providing support to Azerbaijan's health care system to strengthen PHC since 2008. In 2009, PHCS added one more topic to its activities – TB.

The Project provided technical expertise and support to the National TB Program and the Ministry of Health National Center of Public Health and Reforms (NCPHR) in developing two CPGs on TB case finding and treatment (including treatment of drug-resistant (DR) TB). To facilitate the process, a technical working group was established which included specialists from the National Institute of Lung Diseases, Medical Post-Graduate Institute, Medical University, Ministry of Health, Sanitary Epidemiological Service, NCPHR, and PHCS itself.

To develop the CPG on TB treatment, the TB working group reviewed international best practices and WHO recommendations. Improvement of TB case finding through introduction of new diagnostic (molecular) methods and shifting from inpatient to outpatient care models through involving PHC facilities are key issues emphasized in the CPGs.

"I am looking forward with hope now," said Mamed Babayev, a 26-year old DR TB patient from Ganja where doctors have been trained in WHO standards and new evidence-based guidelines. "When I learned of my diagnosis, it was like a death sentence for me. Now, after I joined the treatment, I see the future in brighter colors. My plans for a happy family will hopefully come true."