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Ivy Tech faculty member goes to Moldova to teach respiratory techniques

An Ivy Tech faculty member recently spent time in Moldova, an Eastern European Republic, to teach hospital staff respiratory techniques for babies in neonatal intensive care units.

Mark Kinkle is Dean of the School of Health Sciences and the School of Public and Social Services, of Ivy Tech Community College in Sellersburg. He visited Chisinau, the capital of Moldova, from September 20 to October 1. He was invited to participate as part of a seven-member team from the University of Louisville. Kinkle served on the team as a respiratory therapist, his field of expertise.

This specialized course comes at a time when the republic of Moldova is starting a program of registering all babies with a weight of at least 500 grams (about a pound and a half) and 22 weeks of gestation. This course is the result of collaboration between the State University for Medicine and Pharmacy, known in Moldova as “Nicolae Testemitanu,” and the University of Louisville.

Together with the specialists from the U.S., the neonatologists gain practical knowledge in innovative techniques of catheterization of central and peripheral vessel. Discussions are also held about proper nourishment for babies with low and very low weight, about pulmonary mechanical ventilation, and about care in the case of different disease states of the newborn.

The visit was organized by the Department of International Pediatrics at the University of Louisville and was made possible with the collaboration from Dr. Dan Stewart, Director of Neonatal Section at Kosair Children’s Hospital in Louisville. Each team is made up of neonatologist doctors, nurse practitioners and a respiratory therapist.

The US specialists have mentioned that neonatal care in the Republic of Moldova has improved significantly in the last few years. This is due in part to the new equipment available in the perinatal centers in Chisinau and Bati. The equipment was provided by the government of Switzerland.

Learning how to use the equipment properly was a key part of Kinkle’s role in the trip, he said. “the people themselves are truly interested in helping, but they don’t necessarily possess the knowledge to help themselves,” Kinkle said. “That was our role, to help teach them how to use the equipment and to help provide some education on care of premature and other critically-ill infants.”

As part of the team from the University of Louisville made rounds daily to see patients and make recommendations on their treatment. In the afternoon, the resident doctors at the hospital would give a lecture on a topic they had researched. A physician who spoke English acted as a translator throughout the trip, Kinkle said.

“Working with critically-ill infants is challenging work, and we hope to have taught those at the hospital ways of handling those health issues that will result in lower infant mortality rates,” Kinkle said. “It is an exciting time to see the technology that they now have. The equipment truly is life-saving when used properly.”

Kinkle has worked for Ivy Tech for four years. In addition to teaching respiratory care classes, he supervises 50 staff and faculty members in the School of Health Sciences and the School of Public and Social Services. The two schools combined are among the largest at Ivy Tech Southern Indiana, with some 1,000 students enrolled.