



Birth defects surveillance in Ukraine: a process.

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Abstract: Birth defects (BD) surveillance using international standards was introduced in Ukraine by a network of five BD centers located in northwestern, central and southern regions. BD centers provide resources to access current and comprehensive information and to nurture partnerships with physicians, administrators, parental support groups, educators, and humanitarian assistance organizations. One outcome was the vigorous and popular website International BD Information Systems (IBIS). The network is now incorporated as OMNI-Net Ukraine. The program has documented high prevalence rates of neural tube defects (NTD); fetal alcohol effects (FAE); and idiopathic developmental retardation among orphans that prompted prevention and amelioration initiatives. Further program objectives include: universal folic acid flour fortification, as recommended by the Ukrainian Academy of Medicine; continued research on methods to reduce FAE in collaboration with partners from California; opening other early infant stimulation centers funded by local authorities, modeled on those in Rivne and Lutsk; and linking BD prevention with bioethical considerations, which is a topic of interest in Ukraine in part enhanced by the effects of Chernobyl.

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