

# **Initiation of the Centre for Maxillofacial Prosthetics and Renovation of the Peri-operative Care Unit within the Department of Head and Neck Oncology in the Institute of Oncology in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.**

## **- Outreach activity by the ISMR and Smiles for Moldova Foundation -**

**Report February 2007 – July 2010 by Dr Robert P. van Oort\*, Dr Harry Reintsema\***

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## **Introduction**

Dr Rob van Oort retired from in 2007 after providing Maxillofacial Prosthetic (MFP) patient care, education and research for 39 years (1968 – 2007) in the State University Groningen and at the University Medical Centre Groningen (UMCG). A Farewell Conference in the UMCG was held in Dr. Rob van Oort's name in February 2007 with many of the international scientific community in the area of Maxillofacial Rehabilitation in attendance. The purpose of this conference was also to raise funds for the Maxillofacial Care in LAMIC (Low and Middle Income Countries - *UN definition*). Donations from colleagues, friends and patients were collected to initiate a Centre for Maxillofacial Prosthetics in the Institute of Oncology in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. Dr Rodica Mindruta, an oncologic surgeon from this Institute, had expressed her sincere desire to establish a comparable centre like the one she had visited in the UMC Groningen. Maxillofacial prosthetic services had previously not been available in her country. Moldova, a small former Soviet republic positioned between Romania and the Ukraine, is one of the poorest countries in Europe.

Jörgen van der Pol, a former patient of his, offered to raise money by organizing a sponsored kayak tour from Groningen to Chisinau; a journey over rivers and waters spanning more than 4000 km. The tour was also instigated to draw attention to the oncology problems in Moldova.

## **Strategy**

In a report Dr. van Oort described a program for MFP care in institutes worldwide in LAMIC and suggest starting with the Institute of Oncology in Chisinau. The initiative was discussed with organisations with experience in development projects in former Eastern Europe countries, like COS – Groningen.

In October 2007 PUM, a Dutch organisation in The Hague that recruits retired professionals for consulting tasks in LAMIC, asked Dr van Oort to give advice for the initiation of a Dental Centre for Head and Neck oncology in Chisinau. The PUM project was carried out combined with an invitation for a contribution to an international Head and Neck Oncology Conference in Chisinau in October 2007.

The Project produced a report entailing an inventory of wishes and possibilities regarding maxillofacial rehabilitation in the Oncologic Institute in Chisinau. The required plans were added to the earlier report 'LAMIC for MFP'.

### **Fund Raising**

Preparations for the kayak fundraising tour started in December 2007. In February 2008 the Foundation "Smiles for Moldova" (SfM) was executed to canalise the possible financial stream. The solo-kayak tour started on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from Paterswolde near Groningen (NL), over the Wadden Sea, across the rivers Ems, Weser, Rhine, Elbe, Danube, Dnester, as well as over the Black Sea/Ukraine to Chisinau in Moldova, where he arrived on August 27<sup>th</sup>.

The fundraising kayak tour net a total of €21,000.00, after deduction of the costs for the event. This was then donated to the SfM Foundation. The sponsor tour received wide media attention in the Netherlands, Germany, Serbia, Croatia and the Republic of Moldova; so was his tour followed with blogs in a national paper (De Volkskrant) and on the website of the foundation ([www.smilesformoldova.nl](http://www.smilesformoldova.nl); later [www.smilesformoldova.eu](http://www.smilesformoldova.eu)).

### **Project preparation in the Institute of Oncology (2008-2009)**

Dr Rodica Mindruta was the initiator of the project inside the Institute of Oncology (OI). The need for Institute of Oncology is essential in Moldova and it was Dr. Rodica Mindruta who initiated MFP centre within OI. He overcame the initial barriers of finances and the necessity to integrate the new MFP clinic within OI.

The Head of the Department of Head and Neck Oncology, Professor Dr Tsibirna, and senior colleagues were positive from the very start of the first PUM project. Cultural differences between Western Europe and Moldova were identified and resolved. Mutual respect between specialists trained in different countries had to be fostered.

### **Project upgrading and development**

The Smiles for Moldova Foundation provided initial funding for the MFP centre. The first half-year of the year 2008 was dedicated to restructuring of the management in the OI in Chisinau. In the autumn of 2008 Dr G. Hille from the Foundation Urgenta, Netherlands, established collaboration with the MFP centre.

This foundation had earlier established a project for medical gas systems in the Children's Hospital 'Emilian Cotaga' in Moldova. ACASA (Asociatia pentru Caritate si Asistenta Sociala), a local administrative support organisation in the area of development aid, that assisted Urgenta in earlier projects, was approached for supervision of the building activities, administration and financial reporting. In October 2008 Ir. Hille visited OI and it was suggested to the directory of OI to extend the initiation of the Dental Centre for MFP with a renovation of the Department of Palliative Care in the basement of the hospital and the Department for Preoperative Care of Head and Neck Oncology and Microsurgery on the third floor as well. Dr. Mindruta and

Dr. Pogonet detailed the project plan in two languages (English and Rumanian) in March 2009.

In the period of December 2008 to April 2009 requests for further funding were presented to Dutch organisations, like NCDO (???) and the Innovation Fund of Health Care Insurances. On July 24<sup>th</sup> 2009 a four-party contract was agreed upon and signed between the Institute of Oncology, Smiles for Moldova Foundation, Urgenta, and ACASA (???). An important part of the contract was that OI / Ministry of Health Care shared 20% of the total costs.

In the period August 2009 to December 2009 a detailed budget for the renovation and refurnishing was calculated by ACASA and the final budget calculation was presented on the 9th of December 2009. Based on the final costs budget a supplementary sponsor request was submitted to the 'Janivo Foundation', the 'Anton Jurgens Foundation' and the Dutch Embassy in Kiev and granted over the following months.

## **Building activities in OI**

The reconstruction of the Dental Centre for MFP comprised of a dental laboratory and two clinical treatment rooms was started on December 6<sup>th</sup> 2009 and was completed in the middle of January 2010. The renovation of the Department of Peri-Operative Care started in week 2 of January 2010. As initially only a partial budget was available, during a control visit of Ir. Hille in February a prioritization plan was presented for all budgeted rooms and halls. The patient clinical treatment rooms were identified as to have the highest priority. The request for additional funding from the 'Anton Jurgens Foundation' was successful. A request for additional funding to the Embassy of the Netherlands in Kiev was honoured on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June. The second phase of the renovation was then completed in week 21.

## **The lay-out of the MFP centre (Please Standardise the Name) and MFP laboratory; Selection of dentist and technician**

In Week 8 (20 to 26 February 2010) a PUM Audit Project was carried out in the OI. The Directory and the Project managers Dr Mindruta and Dr Pogonet were advised upon the lay-out of the dental office (Polifurnis) and the equipment (Vitasystems). The contracts for delivery were signed in March 2010.

A selection procedure was executed for a dentist and a technician to be trained in Maxillofacial Prosthetics in the near future. Dr. Valentina Luca and Mr. Ivan Vilcu have been presented as candidates to the directors. In a project report to the directory specific advices were presented, i.e. contracts for the employees of the MFP-centre and other issues. By means of a training period financed by PUM and SfM the professionals gain their initial training in the UMC Groningen. It was also agreed upon with the directory to apply for a UIICC fellowship for Dr Mindruta. Prof. Dr. Jan L.N. Roodenburg, head Oral Oncology in the UMC Groningen, agreed to be the fellowship manager.

## **Training period**

In the first plan 'LAMIC for MFP' an initial training period of 6 weeks had been planned. In the current economic situation PUM agreed to subsidize only an initial training period of 2 weeks. The training was organized in the UMCG and the MFP dental laboratory "Gerrit van Dijk" in Groningen from September 20<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup>,

2010. Dr. van Oort followed up in Chisinau with dr. Valentina Luca and Ivan Vilcu in starting up the maxillofacial patients care program from October 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> 2010. For completion of the training, educational outreach programmes will be planned for the next two years in cooperation with the UMC Groningen. This will enable the dentist and the technician to receive a proper training on the job with patients of istitute. The final financing of this part of the project is still pending. To be organised as an Outreach program of the ISMR is to be discussed.

### **Financial Reporting by ACASA**

In week 8 of 2010, ACASA presented a final financial report for the reconstruction. OI and the Ministry presented their financial report of the OI contribution. In week 20, ACASA presented the provisional statement to Ir Hille in combination with the provisional contribution of OI. The SfM Foundation needs to present a financial report to be sponsors by November 2010.

### **Opening of the dental Centre for MFP and the renovation of the third floor.**

The official opening of the MFP Dental Center and the renewed Institute was completed on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2010. The OI directory had organised this opening in the presence of the Prime Minister of Moldova and full media attention. From the Dutch partners Dr van Oort and Ir Hille were present, as well as Jörgen van der Pol as special guest.

### **Summary**

The building and renovation part of the project, initially started for the initiation of a MFP Dental Centre in the Institute of Oncology in Chisinau in Moldova, went through an intermediate decision for extension of the project with the department for palliative care and the perioperative care, and was realized in 3 years time. The four-parties contract proved to be valuable as a leading plan to move this forward.

The role of the project coordinator, Mr. Ir Hille, has proven to be very valuable especially also in bridging cultural and language differences. The project has received financial support from the following:

- The Smiles for Moldova Foundation
- NCDO
- The Janitor Foundation,
- Health Care Company: Het Groene Land”,
- The Innovation Fund of Dutch Health Care Insurers (equipment for dental office),
- PUM, Dutch Senior advisors (immaterial),
- The Anton Jurgens foundation, and
- The Embassy of the Netherlands in Kiev.

## Publicity around the project

During the kayak fundraising tour a great deal of publicity was obtained in the local and the national media in the Netherlands as well in Moldova. The website during this initial period was: [www.smilesformoldova.nl](http://www.smilesformoldova.nl)

In the period of the preparation of the project in Moldova and the realization of the reconstruction a new website was build [www.smilesformoldova.eu](http://www.smilesformoldova.eu)

The whole process of reconstruction and renovation from December 2009 to April 2010 was published in photo-reports.

Dr Reintsema (SfM/ ISMR) has realized a supportive motion of The Board of the International Society of Maxillofacial Rehabilitation; that acknowledged the project as an ISMR Outreach program.

Groningen, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2010



Figure 1. Route of kayak tour of Jörgen van der Pol from Groningen (NL) to Chisinau (MD)



Figure 2. Jörgen van der Pol in his kayak “Cobber” during his tour to Chisinau



Figure 3. In front of the Institute of Oncology, Chisinau - Welcomed before the opening by Dr Rodica Mindruta (in white coat), project leader in OI, June 15<sup>th</sup> 2010.



Figure 4. Start of the renovation of the basement in December 2009



Figure 5. Renovation and Equipment of the dental Centre for Maxillofacial Prosthetics in Oncologic Institute. Donation by Founders in the Netherlands and UMCG.



Figure 6. Prof Tsibirna and director Cernat from O.I. Chisinau and Dr. Robert van Oort on inspection in the maxillofacial unit.



Figure 7. Opening on June 16<sup>th</sup>: the President of Republic of Moldova, Dr Filat, exposes a gold plated plaque about the history and founders of the project. Mr Jörgen van de Poll, (left with Kayak-cap) and Dr. Rob van Oort were present during the ceremony.



Figure 8. The maxillofacial rehabilitation team in Chisinau with Dr. Rob van Oort in the middle. On his right side Dr Rodica Mindruta (surgeon, team manager) and Dr Vadim Pogonet (anaesthetist, manager palliative care) and on his left side dr. Valentina Luca (maxillofacial prosthodontist) and Mr. Ivan Vilcu (maxillofacial technician)