

## Child Health International

Child Health International seeks to minimise geographical inequality in the care of children and young adults living with cystic fibrosis, by facilitating communication and knowledge transfer between UK and overseas medical professionals.

Life expectancy for people living with cystic fibrosis in the UK has increased dramatically over the last 40 years. However, in many countries, the rate of child mortality remains unnecessarily high due to the absence of early and accurate diagnosis, a lack of specialist facilities and delayed uptake of modern treatments.

Since its formation in 1992, Child Health International has developed and implemented a successful model that allows overseas professionals to utilise the expertise within UK multidisciplinary teams to improve treatment of CF patients within their own country. This collaborative approach allows the flexibility to adapt medical care to suit the host country's situation, taking account economic restraints, resource availability and cultural differences. The charity's initial project focussed on CF care within Russia, and saw an increase in life expectancy from 11 to 22 years in a 10 year period. Since then, our work has continued to focus on Eastern Europe, expanding most recently to develop partnerships with a number of Greek medical centres.

To accomplish this, a dedicated project team is established including health clinicians, administrators and project managers who work with the host country's medical professionals to determine the most effective approach to improve the life expectancy of local CF patients. This can range from advice on diet based on locally-available products and training parents/guardians in physiotherapy, to arranging periods of work-shadowing to help overseas professionals develop specialist skills and services.

A key goal of all Child Health International's projects is to develop healthcare infrastructure in the host country that will ensure sustainable improvements well beyond the charities initial involvement. The importance of establishing lasting professional relationships between the members of the two teams is a vital element of the project, enabling ongoing learning and improvement across both partner institutes.

The drugs and enzymes required to improve the quality of life can be unaffordable to families in many host countries and are often not available from local health services. Child Health International therefore works with governments, local administrations and pharmaceutical companies to make medication more accessible and affordable.

To learn more about the work undertaken by Child Health International, visit [www.childhealthinternational.org](http://www.childhealthinternational.org)