

Appendix 8.11

Yelena Dub

Postup

Lviv

December 1, 2005

A right to... the right

HIV-positive people are often feared, badly treated, stigmatized. Sadly, even their rights are sometimes violated. Despite repeated media reports explaining that HIV cannot be transmitted through domestic contacts, the public is still afraid of HIV-positive people. Either afraid, or just does not want to understand these people, believing for reasons unknown that they are not as "good", "clean" or "pious". Hence the most basic rights of HIV-positive people are violated, and unfortunately, this is still typical for our country.

"Five pregnant women who were having problems with prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission turned to us in the last two months, - Maria Kaminskaya, information officer of the "All together" charitable fund, tells us. - Of these five phone calls, two came from medical institutions. In one case it was a maternity clinic that asked us for Viramune (a drug preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV). And this happens amidst the claims that Lviv region provides a 100 percent access to this drug. Another call came from the neonatal center - they asked us to come and examine an HIV-infected child. We have explained, of course, that we are not a medical institution and that we are not able to help them. But the very fact that these requests happen testifies to rather negative trends."

And quite recently, according to Maria Kaminskaya, a pregnant HIV-positive girl who asked to remain anonymous came to the fund. She was getting necessary therapy; she was treated at a women's health clinic. She was due in 6 weeks. She complained about regular problems with access to "free" tests, referrals, admittance etc.

"I had to accompany this girl to the clinic because she had neither energy nor confidence to do this on her own. At the regional perinatal center where HIV-positive women are supposed to give birth, the girl was admitted but for some reason asked "to call back tomorrow." They were explaining this by lack of beds, places etc. - Maria Kaminskaya tells. - What could have happened in this case? For example, she might have gone into labor. To make an ambulance take her directly to the perinatal center, she would have to pay a bribe. If a girl does not have the money, she is taken to the nearest clinic. But the paperwork testifies that she has been admitted to the perinatal center! And the girl will have hard time proving that she has not run away from the center herself, and that it is not her fault."

So the girl came back to the center on the next day, and she delivered her child on Sunday night. "She told us right away that she got no meals after that, she was washed carelessly, wrapped in some rags. She could not get up because of several ruptures, - Maria Kaminskaya continues. - True, an infectiologist came to examine her on the next day from the regional AIDS center, and explained to her what to do next etc.

"But we were most astonished by another fact, - I was told at the fund, - a nurse came to the girl and told her to buy suture for ligation of umbilical cord... It is 4 hryvnias and 50 kopecks - this is how much this suture costs."

We have not verified this story intentionally. We could not publish the girl's name, and proving any part of this with documents is rather hard," - the "All Together" staff shrugs helplessly. Nevertheless, this story must be told to remind medical personnel and other people that HIV-positive people deserve that their rights are not violated.