

# The 'Mother Kangaroo' Method in Albania

July 2008

## The project

The 'Mother Kangaroo' method was officially presented in Albania by its inventor, Prof. Héctor Martínez, in September 2003. During the event, the Albanian Health Ministry officially agreed to adopt the 'Mother Kangaroo' method for the treatment of low birth weight infants. The WHO office in Albania also agreed to promote the method in the country.



Dr Eduart Tushe, chief neonatologist at the Obstetric-Gynecological hospital of Tirana, conducted specific research to verify the physical conditions of regional hospitals and the willingness and preparation to take part in the project of health workers.

The results led to the definition of a broad operational plan, in the framework of the IDEASS initiative, to facilitate the implementation of the method and to enhance the pediatrics skills through training and experience exchange in collaboration with the different Decentralized Cooperation partners which offered support to realize the first activities in the regions initially prioritized by the Albanian Government.

## Goals and Impact

The method's promotion activity was carried on in a first phase (2004) in the Region of Durres and, starting from 2008, in the Region of Shkoder. They will be subsequently extended to the rest of the Country.

The Application of the method leads to:

- A reduction in use and costs of *incubators*
- A reduction in the *irrational use of incubators* (no more than 2-3 babies per incubator)
- Improved hospital practices in the treatment of newborn babies by *stimulating breastfeeding* and *reducing infection*
- Greater *professionalism of medical staff* as a result of adopting new practices
- The development of a practical, natural and low cost instrument for baby care through the use of the 'Mother Kangaroo' method
- The creation of child friendly areas for the treatment of low birth weight babies.

The WHO Albania office confirmed in that occasion the support provided to the Ministry of Health for the implementation of Mother and Child care policies, and the attention paid to the IDEASS Mother kangaroo pilot projects implemented in Albania.

## Actors involved

- Albanian Ministry of Health
- Health Districts of Tirana, Durres, Shkoder

- Obstetric-Gynecological hospital of Tirana, "Koco Gliozheni"
- Direction of the Hospitals of Durres, Shkoder, Vlore, Fier.
- "A.Meyer" University Children's Hospital, Florence.
- "Burlo Garofolo" Hospital, Trieste
- Tuscany Region
- WHO Albania
- UNOPS PASARP Programme (until July 2006)
- UNDP/ART GOLD Albania Programme (since September 2006)
- IDEASS International Iniziative

## Main activities

The first pilot project took place on 2005 in the framework of the UNOPS PASARP Programme, in the Obstetric-Gynecological Regional Hospital of Durres, with technical assistance from the Hospital "Burlo Garofolo" of Trieste. The Durres Hospital medical staff held a field trip to Trieste, to gather useful scientific and technical information for the transfer of the M.K. innovation to Albania.



In May 2005, the "Mother Kangaroo" method started to be successfully implemented in the Durrës Hospital. Training activities have been implemented, directed to the possible "Kangaroo mothers", to doctors and nurses. Scientific material has been provided and forms realized to carry out "rooming in" and the follow-up of "kangaroo babies" as soon they are discharged from the Hospital, in collaboration with the territorial health centers.

On 2007, the Region of Tuscany funded a pilot project for the diffusion of the method in the Region of Shkoder, through the technical assistance of the A.Meyer Children's University Hospital of Florence.

On April 2008, the project started the activities in the framework of the UNDP ART GOLD Albania/IDEASS Programme. In a first phase, training activities on Mother and Child care methodologies were carried on in the Hospital of Shkoder, directed to midwives, neonatologists and pediatricians of the Hospital and midwives of other Maternities of the Region: Velipoja, Bushat and Vau Dejes.

The training, conducted by the personnel of Tirana's Neonatology, headed by Dr. Tushe, and by doctors of Meyer Hospital, updated on new concepts in neonatology regarding the immediate treatment of newborn baby, correct use of technology, the importance of mother kangaroo method, congenital infections and treatment, hygiene and other topics. A "Kangaroo Unit" space was identified within the hospital and the project is at the moment rehabilitating the structure and equipping it.

The Health Regional Minister of the Tuscany Region, Mr. Enrico Rossi participated in the activity and the Albanian Ministry of Health was constantly informed on the ongoing project.



The project's second phase, which started in July 2008, envisages the diffusion of the method in the territorial health centers of the District of Shkoder. The personnel trained in the project's first phase led the activity in

the maternity of Bushat, a village 12 km south of Shkoder, focusing to the training to local personnel on new methodologies for the care of newborn, and the more effective actions for baby care in rural areas.

## Results

Mothers, doctors and nurses involved in the projects in Durres and Shkoder adopted the method enthusiastically. In Durres, mothers practice the method from a minimum of 1 hour to more than 8 hours per day). The rooming-in activity, previously not implemented, started with success. It allowed to increase breast-feeding and to improve the relation between the mother and the baby, with nursing assistance. In the Durrës Hospital, babies are now kept close to their mothers, just one hour after their birth. The use of artificial milk is now forbidden, except for some clinical cases.

In Shkoder, some devices in neonatology department started to operate after years of non-working condition, due to the lack of information and professional training. At the same time, the kangaroo care practice became to be systematically actuated.



The health Center of the village of Bushat was equipped with the necessary material for the well-going of the activity and to provide assistance to the newborn in case of breath difficulties or other anomalies.

The “Kangaroo Units” of the two projects will be provided with computer and software for the follow-up activity. Also the territorial

health structures are being involved in the follow-up of the “Kangaroo babies”; the personnel will monitor the growth and development of these children, recording data on a specific clinical form, which has been created. Educational, informative and promotional material is in preparation.

## Perspectives

During the next months the project activity will be improved in other Health territorial centers of the district of Shkoder, in the framework of the collaboration with the Meyer Hospital. The following activity for monitoring and data collection will allow to diffuse the results of the initiative to the national scientific community and to adopt the Kangaroo Care also in other areas of the Countries. On the basis of the experience carried on during the two projects, training activity and promotional meeting directed to mothers, doctors and nurses will be held in the Region of Durres, Vlore, Shkoder, Fier and Tirana. Round tables will be organized with the medical personnel in the health centers in the countryside, in order to spread around at the maximum level the knowledge of the method. The personnel trained by the project will realize training missions to other hospitals, to replicate the project activities with the possible collaboration of WHO Albania Office and the Albanian Ministry of Health.

In the framework of the project funded by the Tuscany Region, the realization of an International final meeting is envisaged, in order to diffuse data, inform on the project results and introduce the strategy in support of Mother and Child Care of the Albanian Government. The event will see the participation of all the involved actors and of Dr.Héctor Martínez, author of the IDEASS innovation and first promoter of the method in Albania.

