

## Twinning Center Hosts Distance Learning Course on Developing Patient Education Materials

The Twinning Center conducted a four-week distance learning course focusing on developing Effective, evidence-based patient education materials in August-September.

According to Warrant Officer Tommy Sajisa of the Zambian Defense Force, "This course could not have come at a better time than now, when so many of our HIV patients are in dire need of information on the ARV medicines that they shall need for the rest of their lives."

Sajisa, head of information technology at Maina Soko Military Hospital in Zambia, says that he learned about many useful online resources for finding valuable information for those looking to develop patient education materials on a broad range of health-related topics, including HIV/AIDS. Sajisa is also the information coordinator at Maina Soko's Learning Resource Center (LRC) — the first LRC established by the Twinning Center in Africa.

"Our patients really need to have easy-to-understand information on nutrition, opportunistic infections, psycho-social support, how to manage ARV side effects, and so on," he points out.

The online course, presented by AIHA ICT consultant Irina Ibraghimova, PhD, a library and information management specialist based in Croatia, provided participants not only with an array of Web sites featuring evidence-based clinical information, but also a number of guidance and tools that will assist them to research, develop, and evaluate patient education materials that meet the needs of their patients.



Through AIHA's LRC project, healthcare professionals, medical librarians, and students of the health sciences can access up-to-date evidence-based research and guidelines; share information with a global network of scientists, clinicians, and others; and participate in online courses on a wide range of topics.

"The course explained how to define your target audience and the objective of the information we are providing," Sajisa explains, noting that it also covered effective ways of presenting and disseminating medical information to patients.

"Online learning courses can be quite expensive, but through the Twinning Center we are able to do them free of charge. I really hope more and more of my colleagues will take advantage of these opportunities and learn from them," he says.

Helen Lungu, a pharmacist at University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, also found the course beneficial. "In my experience, most patients are more interested in treating a condition than preventing it, but this could help me educate them so they can avoid getting sick in the future," she says.