

Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus
Technical Assistance to the National Tuberculosis Control
Program Romania: Trip Report July 10-14, 2005

Robert Burn

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Rational Pharmaceutical
Management Plus
Center for Pharmaceutical
Management
Management Sciences for Health
4301 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 400
Arlington, VA 22203
Phone: 703-524-6575
Fax: 703-524-7898
E-mail: rpmpplus@msh.org

U.S. Agency for International Development

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About RPM Plus

The Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (cooperative agreement HRN-A-00-00-00016-00), works in more than 20 developing countries to provide technical assistance to strengthen drug and health commodity management systems. The program offers technical guidance and assists in strategy development and program implementation both in improving the availability of health commodities—pharmaceuticals, vaccines, supplies, and basic medical equipment—of assured quality for maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, infectious diseases, and family planning and in promoting the appropriate use of health commodities in the public and private sectors.

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Abstract

Tuberculosis is a growing health issue in Eastern Europe, and an inexpensive and effective treatment regimen exists promulgated by the WHO. USAID is funding the Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program to strengthen the drug management aspects of national tuberculosis programs. In Romania, RPM Plus initially assessed drug management information needs for program managers and other key stakeholders of the Romanian national tuberculosis control program (NTCP). Technical assistance has led to improved capacity of program staff to address the key functions of drug management—selection, procurement, distribution and use—for both first line treatment of TB and the treatment of multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). RPM Plus works very closely with the Project Implementation Unit of the GFFATM project, established within the National Institute of Pneumology “Marius Nasta”.

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Key Words

Tuberculosis, national tuberculosis control program, drug management information system, Romania.

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ACRONYMS

DMIS	Drug Management Information System
DOTS	Directly Observed Therapy Short-course [WHO TB Control Strategy]
DOTS Plus	DOTS strategy for MDR-TB
DOW	Doctors of the World
E&E	Bureau for Europe and Eurasia [USAID]
FDC	Fixed Dose Combination
FY	Fiscal Year
GFFATM	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria
MDR-TB	Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis
MoH	Ministry of Health
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NHIH	National Health Insurance House
NIP "Marius Nasta"	National Institute of Pneumology "Marius Nasta"
NTCP	National Tuberculosis Control Program
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
RPM Plus	Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus Program [MSH]
TA	Technical Assistance
TB	Tuberculosis
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

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BACKGROUND

RPM Plus and in-country partners, the Ministry of Health (MoH), National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTCP) and the National Health Insurance House (NHIH), are strengthening the drug management information system (DMIS) for the NTCP.

In July 2004, RPM Plus began a collaboration with the NTCP on the development of a Drug Management Guide (targeted at judet [county] level TB programme staff). The completed guide provided the basis for a training of trainers (TOT) workshop planned for May 2005 at which RPM Plus technical staff would capacitate a cadre of NTCP and MOH personnel to further train programme staff at the county level. Though concurrence was not granted for the travel of RPM Plus staff in May, the NTCP, using training materials provided by RPM Plus, undertook the TOT themselves, in order to keep to the schedule of activities planned under the GFFATM project.

The draft of the document “Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Management” was subsequently field tested at the first of a series of regional workshops for county level tuberculosis control programme staff.

Purpose of Trip

Robert Burn will participate in the third of a series of regional training workshops on drug management. He will also begin programming future planned funding with the USAID mission and counterparts.

Scope of Work

- Brief/debrief the USAID Mission as requested;
- Attend regional training of TB staff, NHIH representatives and pharmacists from judets in DMIS and DM practice by trained counterparts.
- Assess the “field test” of the “Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Management document.
- Discuss with counterparts the opportunity and requirements to introduce spreadsheet based order, reporting and monitoring tool.
- Initiate discussion with counterparts on a programme of activities to be supported with the additional funding from USAID for strengthening the national tuberculosis control program.

ACTIVITIES

- Brief/debrief the USAID Mission as requested;

Robert Burn met with Dr. Alina Panait, Health Specialist, Ms. Ruxandra Datcu, Deputy Director, Democracy and Social Sector Reform Office, and Mr. Rockwell, of the US Embassy Economic Section. Dr. Panait recently joined the USAID office in Romania and in response to her request, the RPM Plus programme activities and achievements were summarized.

The prime purpose of this meeting was to discuss the direction and activities of the RPM Plus programme in Romania funded by the additional Mission support (of \$500,000) for FY05, as notified to MSH by AID Washington. However, the USAID staff advised that they were not aware of any such mission allocation, and subsequently confirmed this the next day after checking with appropriate staff at the Mission.

The discussion consequently moved onto the pipeline of \$250,000 (from FY03 and earmarked for activities in support of the DOTS Plus project) which has not yet been expended by RPM Plus primarily because of the extended period for application and approval of the DOTS Plus project by the Green Light Committee, and subsequent delay in delivery of 2nd line medicines purchased through the GLC, and the prioritization of effort by technical and managerial counterparts from the Program Implementation Unit (PIU) and Marius Nasta Institute of Pneumology on the initiation and implementation of the Romanian GFFATM project. These counterparts were currently also involved in the preparation of the phase II GFFATM project application, which was useful since funds are to be included in the project for drug management activities. It was agreed to ensure that GFFATM project and RPM Plus activities would be complementary.

- Attend regional training of TB staff, NHIH representatives and pharmacists from judets in DMIS and DM practice by trained counterparts.
- Assess the “field test” of the “Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Management document.

A third regional training, to present the Anti-Tuberculosis Drug management document prepared by the PUI with technical input from RPM Plus, had been scheduled for 14th July in Iasi. 50 TB specialists, county TB managers and hospital pharmacists from eight counties would attend. However the unusually heavy rains had caused flooding in the some of the areas between Bucharest and Iasi, and with no alternative (neither rail nor air), Mr. Burn was unable to join the meeting. A report will be obtained from the organizers subsequently.

- Discuss with counterparts the opportunity and requirements to introduce spreadsheet based order, reporting and monitoring tool.

The combined reporting, ordering and monitoring spreadsheet tool developed by RPM Plus to streamline the drug management information system of the National Tuberculosis Control Program, generated significant interest when presented at the two regional meetings held to date. The management of the NTCP is very keen to introduce the tool and have been holding discussions with the National Health Insurance House (a key partner in the distribution mechanism for 1st line medicines in Romania) regarding its implementation. Agreement needs to be reached on possible technical implications for the NHIH computerized system for the management of the financial and distribution aspects of the drug supply, and on the widely supported modification of frequency of reporting and ordering by counties from monthly to quarterly periodicity.

Dr. Popa advised RPM Plus of a modification to the prototype tool needed to address the differences between those counties with TB hospital facilities (where both the intensive and ambulatory phases of treatment were implemented) and those counties with dispensaries (where only the ambulatory phase was managed). RPM Plus immediately modified the tool and will consult further with Dr. Popa to ensure that the issue has been fully addressed.

- Initiate discussion with counterparts on a programme of activities to be supported with the additional funding from USAID for strengthening the national tuberculosis control program.

RPM Plus met with all appropriate partners initially to explore the opportunities resulting from the expected additional funding from USAID. A number of pharmaceutical management areas were discussed as described below. In the light of there not being additional funding, RPM Plus will continue discussion with partners to identify the most needed areas amongst these alternatives for support through the remaining pipeline, and with close association to the ongoing phase I and hoped for phase II of the GFFATM project.

- Pilot the reporting, ordering and monitoring tool in 18 counties to be provided with computers under the GFFATM project;
- Prepare a technical and economic paper on the advantages of quarterly (over monthly) ordering for re-supply of 1st line medicines to encourage agreement by all parties to the change;
- Address the perceived quality issues with 1st line medicines (procured centrally from Romanian manufacturers/distributors) through the establishment of an independent quality monitoring mechanism and the assessment of quality through portable thin layer chromatograph mini-labs;

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- Assess the management capacity of the TB laboratory network and strengthen through the operation of MSH's established MOST tool (Management and Organisational Sustainability Tool);
- Assess the suitability of the MSH Brazil MDR-TB surveillance and drug management software for use within the Romanian MDR-TB program.

Collaborators and Partners

Professor P. Stoicescu, Manager National Tuberculosis Control Programme

Dr. Cristi Popa, Medic Specialist Pneumolog, National Institute Pneumology "Marius Nasta"

Ms. Ioana Novac, Project Assistant, PIU-TB

Dr. Lucica Ditiu, Regional Coordinator, WHO Office for TB Control in the Balkans

Dr. Cassandra Butu, National Professional Officer, WHO Office

Dr. Bogdan Pana, Director, Doctors of the World in Romania Project

Dr. Emil Andrei Cochino, Coordinator, DOW Project

Adjustments to Planned Activities and/or Additional Activities

RPM Plus took the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Doctors of the World in Romania project, to share information about each project and to discuss the potential for collaboration.

Doctors of the World implement an information and education program for the Roma population. A recent achievement has been the production of a video/DVD targeted at this group which conveys the message that tuberculosis is curable and stresses the need to complete the course of treatment.

DOW in Romania is also implementing, with the Romanian Red Cross, an incentives scheme for TB patients to encourage DOTS and adherence to the 6-month ambulatory phase of treatment, in three counties (Bucharest, Iova and Constanta). MSH has been in touch with DOW regarding this GFFATM-funded pilot project, as part of a MSH compilation and distillation of worldwide experiences in incentive programs, and recently DOW had responded to a questionnaire. MSH/RPM Plus will be holding a session at the IUATLD Congress in Paris in October 2005 at which the results of the survey of incentive schemes will be presented and debated.

A further incentive project in Pietra Neamst has been initiated and will be implemented over the next 12 months. RPM Plus and DOW discussed the latter's experiences with the availability and quality of the anti-TB medicines provided in the DOTS program. The DOW representatives, recognizing the importance of a continuous supply of medicines to a successful DOTS program,

will consider whether it is possible to monitor such pharmaceutical management issues during the implementation of the new incentive project.

Dr. Lucica Ditiu and Dr. Cassandra Butu of the WHO Office for TB Control in the Balkans were also met during the visit to Romania, to exchange information on our respective organizations current activities and views on future priority areas within pharmaceutical management for the DOTS and DOTS Plus projects.

NEXT STEPS

Immediate Follow-up Activities

Summarize and prepare preliminary budgets for the alternative activities proposed for the remaining pipeline and dialogue with the National Tuberculosis Control Program to prioritize these and decide which to implement over the next months.

Share the updated ordering/reporting/monitoring spreadsheet tool with Dr. Cristi Popa for him to review and assess whether the modification made fully responds to his comments.

Recommendations

Of the possible activities outlined above, RPM Plus proposes that priority be given to the following activities:

1. The piloting of the reporting, ordering and monitoring tool in 18 counties to be provided with computers under the GFFATM project, in order to capitalize on the DMIS work undertaken to date;
2. Strengthening the management of 2nd line medicines in the DOTS Plus project, in particular by assessing the feasibility of implementing a surveillance and drug management software application based on, or similar to, the program developed by MSH Brazil for the MDR-TB program in that country.

Agreement or Understandings with Counterparts

R. Burn will follow-up with RPM Plus management and USAID Washington to clear up the mis-understanding about future mission funding for TB activities in Romania.

ANNEX 1: REQUEST FOR COUNTRY CLEARANCE

TO: Gabriella Paleru, USAID/Romania
Alina Panait, Health Specialist, USAID/Romania

FROM: Management Sciences for Health (MSH) Rational Pharmaceutical
Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program

SUBJECT: Travel of MSH/RPM Plus Senior Program Associate Robert Burn
July 9-15, 2005. RPM Plus Cooperative Agreement No.: HRN-A-00-
00-00016-00

COPY: Anthony Boni/ Global HSPR/CTO RPM Plus
Kama Garrison / Global USAID
Delna Gandhi / USAID E&E Bureau
D'Arcy Richardson/ USAID E&E Bureau
Douglas Keene, Director, MSH/RPM Plus
Maria Miralles, Deputy Director, MSH/RPM Plus
Andrey Zagorskiy, Project Manager for TB, MSH/RPM Plus

1. The RPM Plus Program requests country clearance for MSH/RPM Plus Senior Program Associate Robert Burn to Bucharest, Romania from July 9-15, 2005.

2. Background:

RPM Plus and in-country partners, the Ministry of Health (MOH), National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTCP) and the National Health Insurance House (NHIH), are strengthening the drug management information system (DMIS) for the NTCP.

In July 2004, RPM Plus began a collaboration with the NTCP on the development of a Drug Management Guide (targeted at judet level TB programme staff). The completed guide provided the basis for a training of trainers (TOT) workshop planned for May 2005 at which RPM Plus technical staff would capacitate a cadre of NTCP and MOH personnel to further train programme staff at the county level. Though concurrence was not granted for the travel of RPM Plus staff in May, the NTCP, using training materials provided by RPM Plus, undertook the TOT themselves, in order to keep to the schedule of activities planned under the GFFATM project.

The draft of the document “Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Management” was subsequently field tested at the first of a series of regional workshops for county level tuberculosis control programme staff.

3. Purpose of Proposed Visit:

Robert Burn will participate in the third of a series of regional training workshops on drug management. He will also begin programming future planned funding with the USAID mission and counterparts.

4. Scope of work for this visit is as follows:

- Brief/debrief the USAID Mission as requested;
- Attend regional training of TB staff, NHIH representatives and pharmacists from judets in DMIS and DM practice by trained counterparts.
- Assess the “field test” of the “Anti-Tuberculosis Drug Management document.
- Discuss with counterparts the opportunity and requirements to introduce spreadsheet based order, reporting and monitoring tool.
- Initiate discussion with counterparts on a programme of activities to be supported with the additional funding from USAID for strengthening the national tuberculosis control program.

5. Anticipated contacts:

USAID/Romania; officials and specialists from the Romanian Ministry of Health and Family; National TB Program; National TB Institute.

6. Logistics:

Robert Burn will arrive in Bucharest on July 9 and depart on July 16. No Mission assistance is required.

7. Funding:

The in-country work will be paid for with USAID Europe and Eurasia Bureau funds.

8. Action:

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Please advise Anthony Boni, USAID/G/PHN/HN/HPSR, that Robert Burn has received country clearance to travel to Romania as planned by replying via e-mail to aboni@usaid.gov, tel. (202) 712-4789, fax (202) 216-3702. Please send carbon copies to Kama Garrison at kgarrison@usaid.gov, Robert Burn at rburn@msh.org; Andrei Zagorskiy at azagorskiy@msh.org, Douglas Keene at dkeene@msh.org, Maria Miralles at mmiralles@msh.org and Meriel Jimenez at mjimenez@msh.org.

Thank you in advance for Mission cooperation.

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