

Rahib Mammadov: “Watching TV Helped Me to Learn About Tuberculosis”. (Azerbaijan)

“First I thought I had colds. If I got treatment my coughs went away. But when the treatment finished- they came back. I began to feel weaker, lost some weight. And then, one day, I saw a commercial on TV, where I learnt that symptoms like mine could be symptoms of tuberculosis”, said Rahib Mammadov, a 40-year hairdresser from one of Baku suburb settlements.

Rahib is one of many TB patients in Azerbaijan who did not have much information about TB prior their illness. Like many of his peer patients, he does not read books or newspapers much. TV is the main source of information for him and his family. That’s why the Public Service Announcements on symptoms, ways of transmission and importance of early treatment were chosen by the Azerbaijan Health Communication Association (AHCA) as the best tool for raising public awareness on TB in Azerbaijan.

“It was very hard to obtain a free air time for social advertising, but we managed to do it”, said Nurlan Aliyev, the Chairman of the AHCA.

Results of an omnibus survey initiated by the AHCA among 980 respondents in nine regions of Azerbaijan demonstrated that 23% of respondents saw at least one of the PSAs, and 39% of the viewers found it attractive and important.

“We wish that the number of viewers were higher”, said Jamila Azizova, the Project Coordinator. “But we understand that this would have required much higher frequency and wider coverage of the audiences. Still, if our PSAs helped to save at least one life- they were worth making”.

Rahib has already completed his treatment which he undergone in the Lung Diseases Institute in Baku. He was a very responsible patient, and he made sure that his family members got checked for TB as well. He regularly took his medicines, and followed the doctors’ prescription very closely. Now he is completely cured from TB.

“I wish all TB patients come and see a doctor as early as possible. There are good doctors here, who treated me very well. There are necessary drugs. You should not be scared of TB. I know now that it is curable”, added Rahib.

The Azerbaijan Health Communication Association is a non-government organization promoting health by means of communication. Developed in association with the National TB Control Programme under the Total E&P-Azerbaijan funded Development of Communication Materials for Efficient Treatment and Prevention of TB project, two

PSAs were placed on three national and seven regional channels during November and December 2010, 155 and 635 times respectively.