



Improving cervical cancer screening in the Republic of Moldova

Volunteers for the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) were:

- Dr Charles van Heyningen**, International Advisor for Europe, RCPATH
- Dr Michael Coutts**, Consultant Gynaecological Pathologist, Maidstone Hospital, Kent
- Dr Mary Brett**, Consultant Cellular Pathologist, Southmead Hospital, Bristol
- Mr Hedley Glencross**, Biomedical Scientist, Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth.

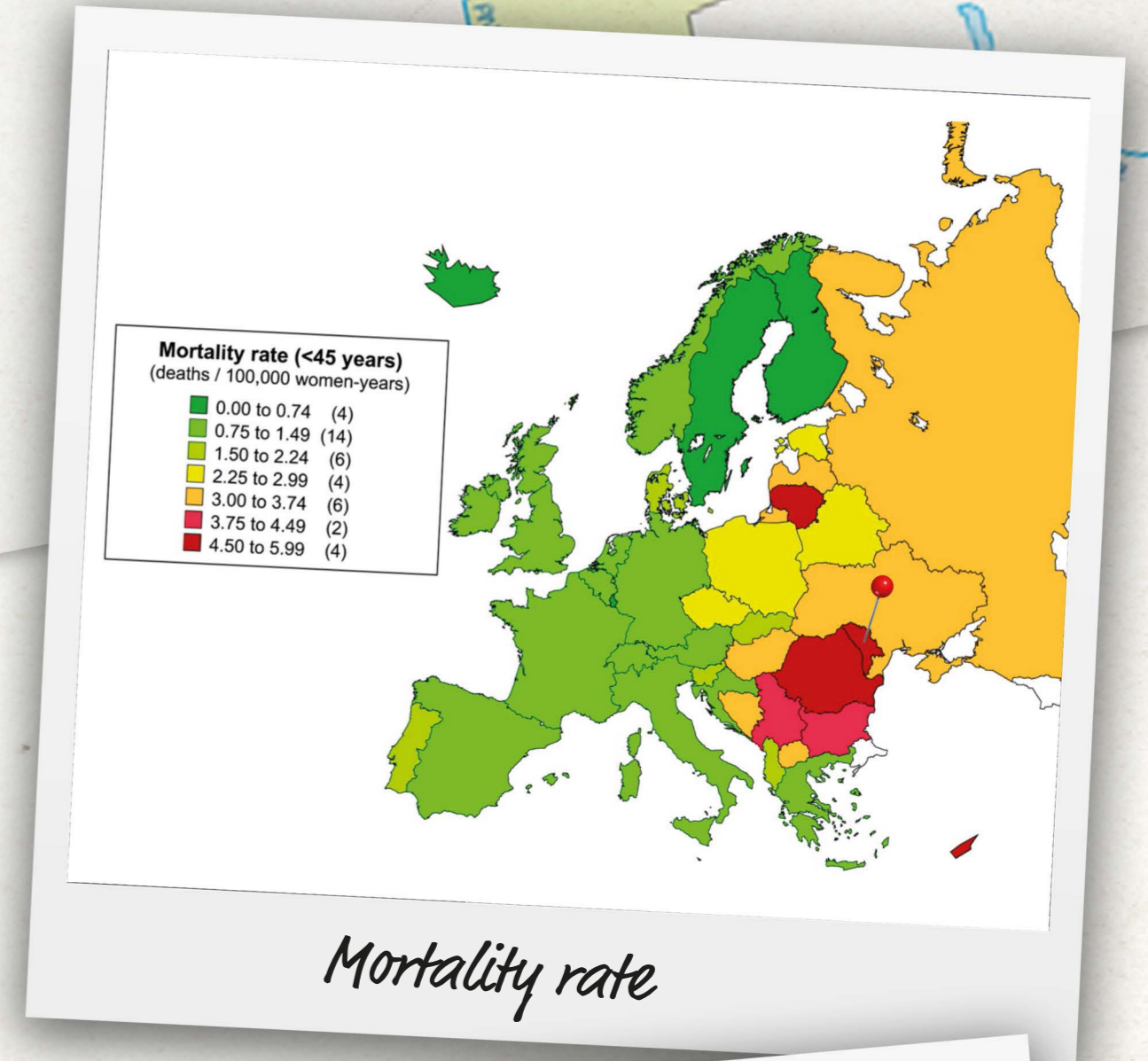
Background.

- Cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates are very high in Moldova (see map) compared to the rest of Europe.
- The incidence of all cancers, including cervical cancer, in Moldova had increased from 2005 to 2012, with cervical cancer the second commonest cancer among women.

The Royal College of Pathologists was approached in 2016 by the:

- Director of the International Cervical Cancer Association (ICCA)
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Ministry of Health in the Republic of Moldova.

The College was asked to help with the implementation of a national cervical screening programme in Moldova. The project's aim is to build Moldova's capacity for gynaecological pathology and reduce the high incidence of death from cervical cancer.



Mortality rate



The Institute of Oncology in the capital city, Chisinau.



Visit to the Pathology Department at the Orhei District Hospital.

Our contributions

Volunteering by UK pathologists and the College:

- Two medical pathologists volunteered to visit Moldova in 2016 and assess current equipment and practices. We visited several clinical laboratories in the capital city, Chisinau, and one regional laboratory. During the visit, training needs were discussed and a training plan agreed, to include training in the UK, improvement actions to be implemented in Moldova, and a follow-up training workshop in Moldova.
- Two pathologists from Moldova were trained at Maidstone Hospital in Kent over three months, under the supervision of a consultant gynaecological pathologist.
- Three training workshops were held in Moldova in 2017-18 to increase capacity to implement the screening programme. The UK gynaecological pathologists and biomedical scientist contributed to the training of 15 Moldovan pathologists, made recommendations on laboratory service requirements, a curriculum and now provide ongoing online training.

Outcomes & benefits

Early in 2018, the Moldova Cervical Cancer Prevention Week was launched to raise awareness about the need to prevent this disease. Updated training, education, equipment and regulations have been introduced.

Over 760,000 Moldovan women aged 25-61 years are expected to benefit from improved screening services. The national cervical cancer incidence is expected to decrease by 20% and mortality by 5% by 2025.

Vaccination and regular cervical screening have the potential to reduce cervical cancer deaths by at least 80%. The RCPATH international department welcomes volunteers for future projects like this one.



Dr Charles van Heyningen, Dr Michael Coutts and Dr Philip Davies (Director ICCA) discussing involvement by RCPATH at the UNFPA office in Chisinau.

The College international department staff and four medical professionals who volunteered to collaborate have played a major role in the implementation of this disease prevention initiative. The international regional advisor has benefitted by learning how to successfully engage overseas towards improving health in a resource limited country.