

INTO *the* HEARTLAND CAMPAIGN

TOMSK III SURGICAL-EDUCATIONAL MISSION

APRIL 15-26, 2008



PATIENT: OLEG K.

Age	18 months
DOB	November 24, 2006
Birth weight	8 lbs 14 oz
Current weight	24 lbs 3 oz
Home	Barnaul Barnaul Oblast 220 miles from Tomsk
Mother	Olga
Father	Evgeny
Diagnosis	Truncus Ateriosus, Absent Left Lung
Open-heart surgery	April 22, 2008
Discharged	Discharged to pediatric ward May 30.

THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE FAMILY

Olga, Evgeny, their 10-year-old daughter Irina, and baby Oleg live in a three-room apartment that they were able to buy only because it was old, dilapidated, and lacking the basic comforts of gas and electricity. They are both professionals – Olga is a landscape designer and Evgeny is an attorney – but they have a very small income. They renovated the apartment themselves, and then began to turn their dream of a second child into real plans. In anticipation, Evgeny took a job in Chechnya, where he could earn more. He was forced to return home after being diagnosed with leukemia.

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND CONDITION

Oleg's serious heart defect was diagnosed immediately after his birth in a local hospital, where doctors also discovered that his left lung had never developed. The doctors told Evgeny and Olga that although his heart defect was theoretically operable, the combination of only one functioning lung plus his complex defect was too challenging for any surgeon in Russia. The doctors added that Oleg's condition would prove fatal.

Although Barnaul is only 222 miles from Tomsk, physicians there were not yet aware that the Tomsk Cardiology Institute is becoming a major center for congenital heart care in Siberia. Olga and Evgeny refused to believe that no one in Russia could fix their baby. They went from doctor to doctor until arriving in Tomsk for an examination when Oleg was 20 days old.

Shortly after our colleagues in Tomsk had provided Oleg's parents with a full and accurate cardiac diagnosis, Oleg's symptoms worsened and he returned to the cardiac center with severe breathing problems. The Tomsk specialists performed a minimally-invasive procedure in the cath lab and told Oleg's parents that the baby would need another procedure in six months. The family went home, optimistic about having found a way to save Oleg's life. Nonetheless, Olga could not really bear to think of surgery: "He was still so tiny. I wasn't sure that I wanted to hand over my baby to heart surgery. It was so frightening."

Oleg's surgery was scheduled for January 2008, but the Tomsk cardiac staff recommended postponing the operation until the Heart to Heart team arrived in the Spring. Because Oleg has only one functioning lung, his post-operative care required special monitoring, including extra time on the ventilator. After five weeks in the ICU, he was discharged to the pediatric ward on May 30.

Based on an interview conducted in Tomsk, in Russian, by Heart to Heart volunteer Rose Glickman, PhD.