

INTO *the* HEARTLAND CAMPAIGN

TOMSK III SURGICAL-EDUCATIONAL MISSION

APRIL 15-26, 2008



PATIENT: MASHA Z.

Age	1 month old
DOB	March 17, 2008
Birth weight	4 lbs 11 oz
Current weight	7 lbs 5 oz
Home	Izhevsk Rep. of Udmurtia 1,195 miles from Tomsk
Mother	Natalia, 34 years old
Father	Aleksandr, 33 years old
Diagnosis	Double Outlet Right Ventricle
Open-heart surgery	April 24, 2008
Discharged	May 9, 2008

THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE FAMILY

Natalia and Aleksandr and their 13-year-old son live in Izhevsk, with Aleksandr's parents. Natalia's parents live a five-minute walk away. Natalia is an operating room nurse in an eye clinic. She is knowledgeable about medicine and uses the Internet to research Masha's condition. Aleksandr works as a taxi driver.

Natalia's pregnancy was uneventful until the 38th week, when she was diagnosed with hypertension. She delivered Masha by Caesarian and suffered post-operative complications. Masha's heart defect was diagnosed eight days after birth, and the baby was sent to the local cardiac clinic. Natalia tells us that the center is good, but limited to diagnosing. Given the choice of Moscow or Tomsk for Masha's surgery, Natalia was clear that she wanted to take their baby to Tomsk. The family successfully applied to the Russian Charitable Fund for help, which also covered the 21-hour train journey.

Natalia describes herself in the month since Masha's birth as distraught, weakened by her post-Caesarian complications, and terrified for her child. "In a sense, it hasn't helped that I know so much about medicine," she comments. "Aleksandr is a great comfort. He holds himself together for my sake." Unfortunately, hospital stays for fathers are not possible; the mother stays with her child in a room with as many as five other mothers and their very sick children. Because Natalia and Aleksandr live over a thousand miles away, they have no friends or relatives in Tomsk with whom Aleksandr can stay. A hotel would be too expensive, so he will not be able to stay in Tomsk after Masha's surgery.

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND CONDITION

The joint Heart to Heart-Tomsk medical team recommended that Masha have surgery as soon as possible. Aleksandr wondered out loud, "It is really necessary – or possible – to operate on such a tiny baby? Shouldn't we wait until she is bigger?" Heart to Heart's cardiologist took great care to explain that, because Masha's heart is so inefficient, her caloric needs are greater than the norm, yet her heart and lungs are "working overtime." This results in chronic shortness of breath, leading to tremendous difficulty in eating. Without immediate surgical intervention, Masha will become increasingly weak and critically ill. Fifteen days after her surgery, baby Masha is ready to leave the hospital.

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