

INTO *the* HEARTLAND CAMPAIGN

TOMSK III SURGICAL-EDUCATIONAL MISSION

APRIL 15-26, 2008



PATIENT: NATASHA S.

Age	6 months old
DOB	November 30, 2007
Birth weight	7 lbs 8 oz
Current weight	11 lbs 11 oz
Home	Novokuznetsk Kemerovskaya Oblast 200 miles from Tomsk
Mother	Kristina, 22 years old
Father	Vladimir, deceased
Diagnosis	Unbalanced AV Canal (Single Ventricle)
Open-heart surgery	April 23, 2008
Discharged	May 14, 2008

THE HOUSEHOLD AND THE FAMILY

When baby Natasha was two days old, doctors at the local hospital detected a congenital heart defect. Three days later, Natasha's father, Vladimir, and a co-worker were killed in a car accident. Vladimir was 21.

The pediatrician advised Natasha's mother, Kristina, to put Natasha in an orphanage. In Russia, this advice is commonly given to parents of babies with health problems, especially babies born to single mothers or into poor families – and Kristina is both. Before the baby was born, Kristina worked as a clerk in a supermarket. Now Kristina and Natasha depend heavily on Kristina's mother, who does not earn much either. Nonetheless, Kristina and her mother, disheartened by the pediatrician's attitude, did not seriously consider his recommendation.

Immediately following Vladimir's death, Kristina was quite fragile. Now, she is resigned to the loss of her husband, and her large extended family has rallied around her. Kristina's mother plays a significant role: Kristina often says "we" rather than "I" when describing how she and her mother care for Natasha. Kristina also has a stronger friendship now with the widow of the other man who died in the accident. Her friend has two children; the two women are of great help to one another.

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND CONDITION

The team at the Tomsk Cardiology Institute performed Natasha's first operation when she was two months old, a palliative procedure called a pulmonary artery band, to help reroute blood flow and allow the baby to grow stronger before a more comprehensive heart repair. Since the surgery, Natasha sleeps through the night, but she still eats very little.

The Heart to Heart cardiologists, examining Natasha three months after her palliative procedure, are concerned that she is still too blue. Kristina acknowledges that Natasha has seemed bluer in the last several days. Natasha is lively and smiles readily; her behavior appears to be normal for a baby of her age, despite her relatively small size. The doctors decide to perform the second operation immediately. Kristina understands that Natasha will need a third operation when she is three or four years old. She is very admiring of Dr. Krivoshchekov, Tomsk's first pediatric cardiac surgeon. Kristina realizes that, given Russia's very limited resources for children with heart disease, they are very lucky to have Dr. K. and his team to turn to.

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