Heal Ukraine Group

May 2026 Newsletter

In Collaboration with: Scholars at Risk Harvard University; GMKA Global Medical Knowledge Alliance; Autism Unity; Lake Country Aid for Ukraine; HTWB

Year in Review

In 2025, we welcomed 11 Ukrainian clinicians as medical and surgical observers, who shadowed MGB physicians to develop transferable medical skills and learn protocols and practices to adapt for implementation back home in Ukraine. We also hosted a successful two-day conference at Harvard University with our partners from the Scholars at Risk Program at Harvard (SAR), the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (HURI), Global Medical Knowledge Alliance (GMKA), and multiple academic centers with whom we have been collaborating (under the auspices of UA-MED) around best practices for U.S.-based observerships to help support Ukrainian colleagues. These academic partners include Yale, University of Oklahoma, Stanford, Case Western, Northwestern, and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

What follows below are several 2025 highlights including reflections from observers about their experiences, impact these initiatives are having back in Ukraine, topics covered, and lessons learned about educational programming and partnerships between U.S. and Ukrainian clinicians designed to improve medical care in Ukraine.

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Reflections From Our Observers

Each of HUG's medical and surgical observers spends their time in Boston developing in-depth knowledge of key skills and practices to share and implement when they return home. In the reflections below, our observers share what they have learned and how they have been able to use it to improve medical practice and patient care.

Advancing Burn Care in Ukraine

Through a collaboration between our partner and friend Rudy Myhovych, MD of the Ukrainian Christian Medical Association (CMA), experts from the Heal Ukraine Group (particularly alum observer, Lesia Strilka, MD who was the inaugural recipient of our annual Victoria Amelina award) and GMKA, we facilitated observerships for six well-qualified Ukrainian specialists from the three main burn facilities in their country.

The Ukrainian doctors came in cohorts of two from Kyiv, Lviv, and Vinnytsia including Drs. Halyna Saian, Anna Lopuchuk, Oleksandr Nazarchuk, Roman Chornopyschchuk, Yurii Purskyi, and Roman Sarabakha. Dr. Nazarchuk described his experience as "very fruitful" and reported that it "significantly influenced on developing not only our skills but gave us respectful experience in teaching our colleagues in treatment of burn patients." Dr. Saian, who is the chair of her hospital's burn unit in Lviv, also reports that since her rotation in Harvard hospitals, her confidence and success in treating complex burn patients with massive surface area involvement has been greatly enhanced.

Since launching the initiative and completing observerships in Boston, Drs. Strilka and Lopachuk have accomplished the following at their hospital back home in Kyiv:

- Developed a survey to (once validated with GMKA's assistance) administer at their hospital in Kyiv to assess quality of care provided to burn patients;
- Instituted "time out" practices (which is standard of care in the U.S. -- see box below for details);
- Adjusted their management of burn-induced hypothermia to be more state-of-the-art; and
- Are developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for treatment of burn patients.

These changes are immense and will dramatically improve patient outcomes for those admitted with burn wounds, including temperature control, which is a significant problem for burn patients. Hypothermia occurs in 20%-60% of burn patients and is not only related to the surface area of large burns, but also to lack of attention to particular details when transporting patients (e.g., not removing wet clothes or wrapping in warm blankets) and resuscitating with cold fluids. Adjusting these protocols with focus on hypothermia prevention and management saves lives by reducing risk of bleeding, improving immunity and ability to fight infection, and shortening of hospital stays.

Time Out: Standard Safety Protocol for Burn Care & Antibiotic Use

Prior to debridement or grafting procedures, a standard of care in the U.S. is to use this practice known as "Time Out." Brand new to Ukraine, brought by clinical observers back home following their rotations at MGH, BWH, and Shriners Hospital, the practice involves the clinical team members verifying the patient's identity, burn site, and planned procedure to prevent errors. The brief, active pause (which generally takes between 30 seconds and 2 minutes) allows confirmation of crucial details and includes marking the injured site. Data show that these steps improve accuracy, especially for complex, multi-site burn wounds. Dr. Lesia Strilka reflects that the practice continues to be met with some resistance by doctors in the ORs at home; she patiently shares the data, from medical journals, of improved patient outcomes and continues the approach as an expected protocol within the Department that she leads.

Dr. Strilka and Lopachuk have also implemented, for their burn team, critical antibiotic Time-Outs, which entail review prior to initiating antibiotics and ongoing decision making points about continuation of antibiotic therapy every 72 to 96 hours. This protocol promotes stewardship and prevents over-prescribing of antibiotics as a step toward reducing the dramatic degree of antibiotic resistance seen in Ukraine and worsened by the war conditions given transfers of patients with wounds and spread of infections.

Dr. Viktor Rokutov with Dr. Roman Hayda

Burn care cohort with hosts and HUG team

Treating Bone Cancer for Pediatric Patients

Another collaborative endeavor during 2025 was our cooperation with a Ukrainian based NGO called Tabletocki who sent two orthopedic surgeons, Dr. Viktor Rokutov and Dr. Taras Borachuk, to study state-of-the-art care at Boston Children's Hospital (BCH). Following Dr. Rokutov's visit, he conveyed "extremely positive impressions" about both the hospital experience and his host family stay with Betsy H. and Dave P. Viktor described his month long observership, which was focused on orthopedic surgical procedures for children with cancer, as "interesting and genuinely useful." He reports staying in touch with his mentors from this past fall who continue to provide informational support. Having "observed how the system works overall," Viktor also carries "insights that [he] now strives to implement."

Neurovascular Care

Dr. Yuriy Flomin, a neurologist who specializes in stroke care, completed an observership July 2025 and provided the following thoughtful reflections regarding his time at three premiere Mass General Brigham facilities. Dr. Flomin's overarching description of his HUG observership is that it was "a unique opportunity to engage with one of the world's leading academic neurology programs and learn from eminent stroke neurologists, neurorehabilitation specialists, and cognitive neuroscience." He also shared the following details:

From July 1 to 13, I joined the Charles Miller Fisher Stroke Neurology Service at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) under the guidance of Drs. Natalia Rost, Barbara Voetsch, Mariel Kozberg, and W. Taylor Kimberly. Each day began with morning reports and multidisciplinary stroke rounds, followed by dedicated teaching sessions and clinical shadowing across various settings, including the Emergency Department, NeuroICU, and outpatient Stroke Clinics. I also participated in Telestroke consultations (ASTRO), stroke research meetings, and quality improvement initiatives, including the Comprehensive Stroke Center Quality Task Force meeting and Boston Ackerman Stroke Society (BASS) and the National Institutes of Health StrokeNet's New England Regional Coordinating Center (NERCC) meeting "Cancer-Associated Stroke". These experiences provided valuable insights into high-volume, evidence-based stroke care, advanced neuroimaging interpretation, and team-based decision-making.

Between July 14 and 18, I continued my observership at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, shadowing Dr. Craig Rovito and gaining first-hand exposure to post-acute stroke rehabilitation. This phase of the program deepened my understanding of long-term recovery trajectories and the interdisciplinary approach essential for optimizing patient outcomes in neurorehabilitation.

During the final week, July 21 to 24, I rotated through the Brigham and Women's Hospital Neurosciences Center. There, I observed clinical practice at the Multiple Sclerosis Center and the Division of Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology, including teaching conferences and seminars. I had the privilege of meeting with the leadership of the Harvard Heal Ukraine Group and Global Medical Knowledge Alliance, whose efforts to support Ukrainian clinicians and academics have been instrumental during the ongoing war.

On a more personal note, Dr. Flomin formed a strong bond with his host, Johanna S., even serendipitously helping her with a medical issue.

A welcome celebration for Dr. Yuri Flomin with host Johanna S. and her neighbors

Conference Highlights

In November 2025, the Heal Ukraine Group hosted a conference in conjunction with the Ukrainian Alliance for Medical Exchange and Development (UA-MED), the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University (HURI), and Harvard University Scholars at Risk. Just over 200 attendees joined us in person in Cambridge, with another 40 tuning in online, to learn about and brainstorm further regarding collaborative solutions for Ukraine's pressing healthcare challenges.

The conference featured a broad array of topics about areas where progress has been made in Ukraine as well as disciplines that continue to require growth in Ukraine, including:

- Emergency and trauma care
- Rehabilitation and prosthetics
- Infection control
- Mental health and Psychological trauma
- Healthcare system modernization

Keynote addresses served as a highlight for the large, two-day convening:

- Dr. Vasyl Strilka, Director of High-Tech Medical Care and Innovations at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine
- Oleksandra Matviichuk, Human Rights Attorney, Head of the Center for Civil Liberties and 2022 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient
- Dr. Irwin and Karen Redlener, founders of Ukraine Children's Action Project

2025 Victoria Amelina Award

For the 2025 Victoria Amelina Award, we broadened our request for nominations to include female Ukrainian physicians who observed at U.S.-based academic centers across the country, including Harvard, Yale, Stanford, Northwestern and more. We had remarkable choices, making the decision challenging and time consuming! We are grateful to the depth of thought and care in deliberation exercised by the selection committee:

- Jane Unrue, Director of the Scholars at Risk Program, Harvard University
- Askold Melnyczuk, Founder of Arrowsmith Publishing
- Oleh Kotsyuba, PhD, Director of Print and Digital Publications, Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University (HURI)
- Jacqueline A. Hart, MD, Director of Programs and Partnerships, Heal Ukraine Group
- Nelya Melnitchouk, MD, CEO of Global Medical Knowledge Alliance (GMKA)
- Mark Poznansky, MD PhD, Director of Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center, MGH; Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School
- David Godkin, JD, Intellectual Property Attorney and Homestay Host for Ukrainian Clinicians
- Pam Haran, ESL Teacher and Homestay Host for Ukrainian Clinicians

Dr. Zoia Shepil receiving the 2025 Victoria Amelina Award at the second annual Women in Medicine conference

The recipient of the 2025 Victoria Amelina Award was Dr. Zoia Shepil; Radiation Oncology Specialist from the National Scientific Center of Surgery and Transplantation. The Amelina Award was presented to Dr. Shepil on September 26, 2025, during the second annual Women in Medicine conference in Ukraine, sponsored by GMKA and UA-MED. "During and after her observerships in the United States, Dr. Zoia Shepil distinguished herself as an outstanding ambassador for Ukrainian oncology. Her leadership, resilience, and vision have significantly advanced cancer care in Ukraine, making her an outstanding candidate for the Award. Having lost her home and workplace in Luhansk during the 2014 Russian invasion, she nevertheless persevered, continuing to treat patients in Bucha in 2023 through one of the darkest and most tragic genocidal moments of the war. She further strengthened her expertise through international observerships in the U.S., bringing back modern practices and implementing them in Ukraine. As Director of Ukrainian Radiation Oncology Outreach for Help Ukraine Group of Stanford University, she has volunteered countless hours to education, advocacy, and mentorship, ensuring that her colleagues across Ukraine gain access to training, resources, and global partnerships vital for sustaining cancer care in wartime," writes Natalia Kovalchuk, PhD, Clinical Professor of Radiation Oncology at Stanford Medical, and Dr. Shepil's mentor when she completed an observership.

And in other news...

Congratulations to HUG alumni who celebrated milestones this year!

Past HUG observer Dr. Lesia Strilka and recipient of the 2023 Victoria Amelina award celebrating her marriage to her husband Max

Alum observer, Dr. Inesa Huivaniuk, recipient of the 2024 Victoria Amelina award, and upcoming liver transplant observer Dr. Slava Kopetskyi

Alum observer, Dr. Arkadii Vodianyk, his wife Dr. Anastasia Vodianyk, and big brother Lev welcoming baby Lukian

Former HUG observer Daria Simchuk at her wedding this year

Publications

It's been a very prolific year! The following articles by Heal Ukraine Group alumni and team members were published in 2025 and 2026:

Artyomenko, V. V., Hart, J. A., & Duzyj, C. M. (2025). Supporting maternity infrastructure in wartime Ukraine.The Lancet Obstetrics, Gynaecology, & Women's Health, 1(3), e156-e157.

Artyomenko V, Fachon K, Cardoso M, Zhelezov D, Goodman A, Greenwald M, Velieva Z and Duzyj C. (2026). Perceptions of respectful maternity care in Ukraine during a time of war. Journal of Perinatal Medicine, 54(1), 189-200. https://doi.org/10.1515/jpm-2025-0341

Horiachok M, Potapova K, Ivanykovych T, Yerokhovych V, Ilkiv Y and Sokolova L (2025) Integrating gut microbiota into multidisciplinary perspectives on diabetic neuropathy. Front. Endocrinol. 16:1710868. doi: 10.3389/fendo.2025.1710868

Kovalchuk, N., Zinchuk, A., Beznosenko, A., Semikov, R., Poylin, V., Vash-Margita, A., ... & Melnitchouk, N. (2026). Impact of international observerships on Ukrainian healthcare professionals during the war: a cross-sectional survey study. BMJ open, 16(1), e109052.

Pechak, O., Bielka, K., Frank, M., Fomina, H., Yevstifeiev, D., & Yanitska, L. (2026). Peri-operative antibiotic prophylaxis in obstetrics: a 6-year evaluation of guideline adherence and stewardship impact in a Ukrainian maternity hospital. Infection Prevention in Practice, 100515.

Vodianyk, A., Domin, I., Habicht, J., Baranovskyi, T., Rehse, A. P. C., Deeves, M., ... & Dubrov, S. (2026). Observed practices in surgical site infection prevention in Ukraine: national survey results from 2021 and 2025. Infection Prevention in Practice, 100546.

Vodianyk, A., Diomin, E., Husakov, A., Havrilov, I., Horbachevskyi, A., & Habicht, J. (2025). Healthcare-associated infections and antimicrobial use in Ukrainian acute care hospitals involved in treatment of casualties of war: multi-centre cross-sectional study in 2024. Journal of Hospital Infection, 162, 333-338.

Vodianyk, A., Schehovtsova, N., But, N., Habicht, J., & Wertheim, H. (2025). Continuous on-site mentoring for infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship programmes in war-affected settings: the example of Ukraine. The Lancet Infectious Diseases, 25(7), 714-716.

Vodianyk, A., Shyrobokov, V., & Poniatovskyi, V. (2025). Evaluating the Effectiveness of the WHO 6-Step Hand Hygiene Technique: Impact of Step Omission and Duration on Microbial Reduction. Risk Management and Healthcare Policy, 18, 1591–1600. https://doi.org/10.2147/RMHP.S506993