

Heal Ukraine Group

February 2023 Newsletter



In Collaboration
with:



Newsletter designed, written and compiled by Yasmina Berkat in collaboration with Drs. Poznansky, Hart, Melnitchouk and Serbyn.

Ukraine's healthcare system remains under siege as Russia continues its indiscriminate attacks on the country's healthcare infrastructure, reducing hospitals and clinics to rubble, and disrupting essential healthcare services to the Ukrainian people. Already overwhelmed healthcare facilities face endless challenges as the war persists and more logistical hurdles arise. Yet, despite the dire circumstances, Ukrainian medical clinicians are resilient, displaying commitment to the country's healthcare system and the strength of international support and collaboration. As long as we bear witness to the ongoing humanitarian and healthcare crisis in Ukraine, we must meet their resilience with lasting support to preserve and protect medical care and delivery in the country.

The Heal Ukraine Group ([HUG](#)) is a coalition of Boston-based healthcare professionals working to provide critically needed medical supplies, lifesaving intervention, and education directly and accountably, to the frontlines (where rubble is dismantled) and the search and treatment of survivors continues.

In collaboration with the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization Global Medical Knowledge Alliance ([GMKA](#)), critically needed medical supplies and equipment are procured and delivered to our Ukrainian colleagues on the frontlines. To date, the Heal Ukraine Group (HUG) has supplied tens of thousands of lifesaving surgical materials and medical equipment, ranging from portable ultrasounds, cardiac monitors, and mechanical ventilators to wound vacuum therapy units, boxes of surgical staples and sutures, and surgical headlamps. HUG works with sponsors and partners in Boston and with the outstanding team at Lake Country Medical Aid to Ukraine ([LCMAU](#)), a non-profit organization in Georgia led by Dr. Nicolas Chronos and Ralph Olson, that has raised and dispersed significant funds to support these directed and validated medical relief efforts.

HUG's imperative remains to sustain Ukraine's healthcare delivery as best as possible to conserve the provision of proper medical services for Ukrainians during the war. For as long as the war persists, our support remains for Ukrainians as they push ever forward in resistance.

Our work, detailed below cannot be completed without the full and generous support of philanthropy.

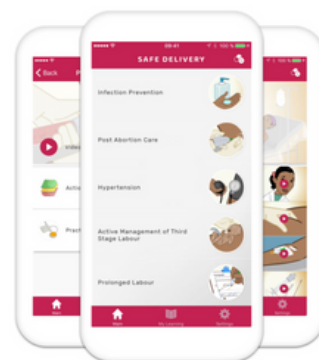
Please join us in support of Ukraine as the country faces a growing healthcare crisis.



Individual stories highlighting accomplishments of the HUG team may be found below. The faces of Ukrainian patients and healthcare workers are blurred to protect their identities at this time of war.

Development of the Ukrainian Version of the "Safe Delivery" App

At the invitation of the Maternity Foundation, GMKA participated in the preparation of the Ukrainian version of the mobile application "Safe Delivery", with advice for obstetricians and gynecologists. Provision of a translated version of the "Safe Delivery" app affords Ukrainian medical clinicians direct and instant access to evidence-based and up-to-date clinical guidelines to support their daily work. Within the application, there are clinical guidelines and animated instructions to advance medical care for gestational hypertension (i.e., perinatal high blood pressure), post abortion care, infection prevention, prolonged labor and other complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. The app also offers a platform to improve skills, knowledge, and confidence for Ukrainian clinicians now performing on a periphery of a healthcare system greatly disrupted by the war. Representatives of GMKA were responsible for the quality and reliability of the Ukrainian translation of the digital guide.



Urgently Needed Supplies to the Frontlines

With Russia's war raging on, urgently needed medical equipment remains paramount as communicated by our Ukrainian colleagues. Therefore, at HUG we maintain critical focus on procuring and delivering these specified supplies. In collaboration with brave GMKA volunteers and the generous funding of LCMAU, a range of equipment and materials were purchased and delivered to final destinations in Ukraine over the course of the past month. The inventory included surgical staplers, now in Donbas, and a patient warmer, otoscope (used to diagnose and treat acoustic trauma as well as tympanic membrane ruptures caused by blast injuries), and additional surgical staplers to hospitals near Bakhmut, the area closest to the heaviest battles. All distributed materials are essential to perform quality surgery and enhance patient outcome in the dangerous settings of frontline medical facilities. Ukrainian physicians expressed immense gratitude for the delivery of these supplies that were carried by Dr. Dariia Simchuk, a returning scholar of the Harvard-HUG SAR program, from the U.S. to Kiev, via Poland, where volunteers then brought the vital materials to the frontlines described. Also achieved this month, transport of cardiac monitors to a neonatal center in Western Ukraine, enhancing the ability of clinicians in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at that hospital to accurately measure heart rates and rhythms of high risk newborn babies. Hospitals in Ukraine, even in the "safer" region of the country, are overwhelmed by surges of internally displaced Ukrainians; thus, every extra piece of equipment grants the hospital and medical personnel increased capacity to treat as many patients as possible.



Blankets for the patient warmer were previously donated by another volunteer group, operated by the Mistral Air instrument that HUG donated.

The Harvard Medical Scholars at Risk (SAR) Program

As highlighted in previous newsletters, the Medical SAR program is an initiative that provides Ukrainian medical practitioners up to six months of specialized training at a Harvard-affiliated hospital, with guidance from mentors of Brigham and Women's and Massachusetts General Hospitals. These clinical observerships not only address the medical education disrupted by the cruel and senseless war, but further contribute to the improvement of medical care and delivery long-term and advancements in healthcare provision for Ukraine. Spearheaded by HUG, GMKA, and the Harvard SAR program led by Jane Unrue, six clinical scholars are at various stages of participation in the program, with our first scholar, anesthesiologist Dr. Dariia Simchuk, having recently returned to Ukraine following completion of her three-month observership. Dr. Simchuk maintains communication with the HUG-Harvard team, her Boston-based mentors, and her cohort of scholars; she is actively disseminating her observations and training to fellow Ukrainian colleagues fighting Russia's war.

Please find below reflections from two of the Ukrainian scholars currently in Boston.

Dr. Vadym Vus is a rural family doctor from Ukraine, consultant of international projects, and trainer of competencies of civilian and military medics. From the beginning of the Russian war imposed on Ukraine, Vadym and his training team started what has been dubbed "destructive innovation;" for example, rather than confining ultrasound use to doctors alone, they teach sonography performance to nurses, physician assistants (PAs), military paramedics, residents, and medical students. This broader application of ultrasound techniques is known as POCUS – Point of Care Ultrasound, which is used for rapid diagnosis, especially in emergency situations, allowing much more immediate initiation of proper treatment. Dr. Vus developed a unique method of quickly mastering sonography skills and has accumulated a database of results. The purpose of his time and studies in Boston is to further research the use of POCUS. He also aims to deepen his understanding of the work of primary healthcare (PHC), emergency room (ER) medicine, mobile medical care, nurses and team collaboration, and wound care in the United States (U.S.) to potentially reproduce observed experiences back in Ukraine.

As a rural family doctor, Dr. Vus acquired a wide array of medical competencies in Ukraine; this breadth of experience facilitates his training of young doctors.

Here, Dr. Vus shares about his work in Ukraine and the value of his learning in the U.S.:

With the beginning of the Russian war, we began to train military doctors and help everyone who is preparing to restore our medicine. Our team currently lacks access to the experience of the best clinics, different training models, and [best practices of] teamwork. This especially applies to primary medical care, ultrasound performance, and work with care. Observation in the best hospital in the world, like Mass General or MGH, under the umbrella of the Harvard School, not only opens up such opportunities, but also gives an opportunity to understand which experience will be most useful and which should not be used in Ukraine. Already in the first month, I saw such technological and scientific breakthroughs that set a high bar in development for Ukraine. Portable magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), drugs that stop cardiomyopathy, smart fly on helicopter, and the use of ultrasound for many conditions. But the most interesting are the methods and models of teaching students, residents, and staff. We have already discussed in working groups and in our ultrasound team what we can apply in Ukraine. Using the Butterfly's cloud for training and correction of participants, teach back, and rounds of medical cases.

Of course, there are also negative features of medicine in the USA: excessive consumption of materials and resources, ignoring simple diagnostic methods, disdainful attitude towards workers on the basic floors of the hospital by narrow specialists. And this negative feature is even more valuable because it will prevent us from making the same mistakes in Ukraine.

Representatives of the National Health Service and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine also provide their comments on my [blog](#). I am sure that every day here in Boston is a step towards a better system of medicine in Ukraine. I am sure that every day here in Boston is a step towards a better system of medicine in Ukraine. But for me, the most important thing is not just the system, but every young doctor I teach. I want them not to be disappointed and not to abandon Ukrainian medicine. For example, the day before yesterday, I spoke with my friend and mentee, who is now in despair because of the low salary of doctors in Ukraine. I tell him that even here in the USA it is not easy, and the road to stability is long and thorny. And paraphrasing your famous American author: I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What should I do, I should catch every Ukrainian medic if he starts to leave because of sheer desperation and desire to leave the country — I mean, if they run and don't look where they are going, I should come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I do all day. I would just be the catcher in the rye :-)

Dr. Sofiya Hrechukh is a psychiatrist from Ukraine with experience working in both inpatient psychiatric hospitals, correctional facilities, and outpatient settings. Since the invasion of Ukraine and resulting war, the civilian hospitals are having to manage both civilian and military populations and care for physical and emotional trauma in numbers not previously experienced. This has led to a recognition of need for an integrated consult-liaison (CL) model, where a psychiatrist proficient in this area serves as advisor and participant to patient care in a medical/surgical hospital. Dr. Hrechukh is in Boston to study and then help build a first of its kind CL program in Ukraine.

I have always liked learning and gaining knowledge has always been my priority since early childhood; so, when my colleague and supervisor, Dr. Oleh Bereziuk, shared the opportunity of going to Boston (Harvard Medical School) for the Scholars at Risk program with me, I was super thrilled. It means the world to us, Ukrainians, to be able to gain the essential knowledge from the best and bring it back home in order to build a new, advanced, healthcare system. As Ukrainian healthcare providers were given a life-changing opportunity to learn from the best, I had not hesitated a second when I sent my CV to the Team.

I am grateful for the support of our healthcare professionals! To be honest, I was on cloud nine when I got accepted to participate! My main goal is to learn CL-psychiatry (Consultation-liaison psychiatry, also known as psychosomatic medicine, is a subspecialty of psychiatry that focuses on the care of patients with comorbid psychiatric and general medical conditions) principles so we can fully integrate psychiatric patients' care into general medicine. I work at the very first psychiatric department incorporated into a general hospital in Ukraine (Lviv, Ukraine). I am also strongly interested in trauma-focused approaches, psychological first aid training, and neuropsychiatry. I have been very impressed by the profoundness of branches and approaches in psychiatry (the women's mental health branch, neuropsychiatry, cardiac psychiatry, addiction psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, etc) at the center (namely, Brigham and Women's Hospital or BWH) where I am observing. I also enjoyed learning the basics of forensics.

Right now, I am in the middle of my observership and already have ideas for how I want to bring the basics of CL and neuropsychiatry back home. I am also building and would like to maintain a firm and broad network with psychiatrists from Boston to share our professional experience continuously.

More on [Sofiya's work back in Ukraine](#)

Ukrainian Fellows of the Harvard SAR Program Speak about Healthcare Challenges in Ukraine as the War Continues

Wonderful teaching and gems from the Ukrainian scholars at a SAR webinar held February 10th. The scholars shared insight to the drastic effects of the war on healthcare services and delivery in Ukraine, with many take home points about dissemination and opportunity for impact that the SAR program fosters:

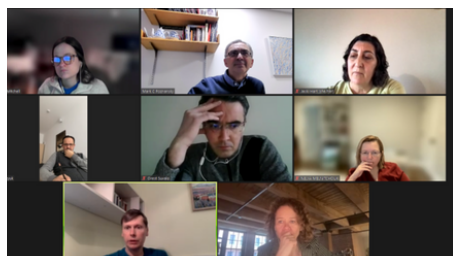
- networking & ongoing collaboration
- engagement of patients as educated partners
- mutual communication (on both sides of the Atlantic) with flexibility of focus and adjustment of topics as the circumstances evolve in Ukraine
- integrating psychological, psychiatric, and trauma-informed care including cultural shifts and systematic steps toward that end
- introducing multidisciplinary models of care
- application of research skills to enhance implementation of EBM and improve patient care.



The Ukrainian Scholars during the SAR panel event, pictured with HUG members. Please see the recording of the webinar [here](#).

SAR Scientific Advisory Board

The scientific advisory board convenes on a bi-monthly basis where members bring fruitful discussion that promotes deeper understanding of the needs of Ukraine and identifies gaps in medical care and delivery in the country that can be addressed by HUG through the SAR program and related initiatives.





As proven through the cardiac monitors kindly donated and delivered to Ukraine within a week of the request, HUG recognizes how professional and personal networks can facilitate the efficient procurement and delivery of urgently needed supplies. **With this, we share below an up-to-date list of the most requested and currently needed supplies in hopes to receive as in-kind donations:**

**ForceTriad Electrosurgical Generator, Covidien (x1),
Rapid Infusers (x2 stationary, x1 for evacuation vehicle) and Disposable kits
Cardiac monitors (as many as possible),
Lung ventilators (preferably, portable, but stationary also are being requested),
Patient warmers and blankets for surgical tables,
Otosopes,
Defibrillators.**

Please contact us at healukrainegroupteam@gmail.com if you have an item available to donate.

We are grateful for the many contributions donated through the Art Auction Gala, Colors of Peace exhibit, Pavlo Gintov, Peabody School Community, and Lake Country Aid Concert fundraisers.

Thank you for considering a donation:

<https://www.gofundme.com/>



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