

Heal Ukraine Group

Year in Review March 2022 - February 2023



In Collaboration
with:



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As the unjust and unfathomable Russian war against the sovereign nation of Ukraine enters its second year, we stand steadfast at HUG to address in whatever way we can the acute and ongoing healthcare needs of the country. The will, determination, and fortitude of the Ukrainian people and their spirit is beyond admirable. They fight on behalf of all of us who believe in civil liberties, self-determination, and democracy. At HUG, we counter the deliberate destruction of healthcare infrastructure and personnel by the Russian Army through our supplying of medical supplies, educational materials and opportunities directly to Ukrainian physicians on the frontlines. We connect and integrate groups and individuals who strive to repair, rebuild, and restore healthcare in Ukraine with the expressed goal of cultivating a stronger, more secure, sustainable Ukraine. These organizations include The Global Medical Knowledge Alliance (GMKA) led by Drs. Nelya and Serguei Melnitchouk, Autism Unity led by Dmitriy Dribinskiy, Lake Country Medical Aid for Ukraine (LCMAU) led by Dr. Nicolas Chronos and Ralph Olson, and Health Tech without Borders (HTWB) led by Dr. Jarone Lee and colleagues. The synergies that exist between our organizations accelerate the process of healing for Ukraine.

OpEds by HUG members published in the Hill that address the implications of the war on Ukraine and the country's healthcare system:

[Addressing Russian crimes against humanity in Ukraine now is good medicine](#)
[Ukraine's 'Dunkirk' moment: Small NGOs need help to avert a humanitarian disaster](#)
[Saving lives, preserving Ukrainian health care to combat Putin's 'kill twice' effect](#)
[WMD in Ukraine: a planetary near-death experience](#)
[Addressing the mental health crisis for Ukrainians in war and peace](#)

Reflecting back on HUG's accomplishments in 2022, a few notable themes stand out: the building and solidifying of relationships, and the ever-expanding concentric circles of kindness. There are many examples from our work with partners on both sides of the Atlantic. We'd like to highlight a few, along with stories of how they each evolved.

Building Relationships

Substantial Support from Lake Country Medical Aid for Ukraine: Over the past year, the consistent and generous fundraising by LCMAU, totaling more than \$100,000, has resulted in the purchase and distribution of medical and surgical equipment directly to the frontlines for Ukraine. Based on stories shared by battling clinicians, the materials and equipment have saved countless lives. The numerous testimonies speak to the success of the LCMAU program in collaboration with GMKA and HUG.

Delivery of surgical loupes



“Хирургические лупы, которые вы подарили нашей клинике, это то, о чем давно мечтали наши хирурги! Уже сегодня, благодаря Вам, используя эти бинокляры, наши хирурги прооперировали новорожденного ребенка... Еще раз огромная благодарность за вашу помощь! Если у Вас будет такая возможность, то нам нужны еще такие бинокляры.”

“The surgical loupes that you presented to our clinic are what our surgeons have long dreamed of! Already today, thanks to you, using these binoculars, our surgeons have operated on a newborn child... Once again, many thanks for your help! If you have such an opportunity, then we need more such loupes.”

Delivery of Butterfly portable ultrasound



"Датчик бомба. Користуюсь завжди. Уже були такі випадки що прям дуже виручав. Як би не було то навіть і незнаю як би прийшлося виходити з такої ситуації."

"The sensor is terrific! I always use it. There have already been such cases that it helped a lot. If I did not have it in my hands, I wouldn't even know how to deal with such a situation."

First aid kits to the frontlines



Distribution of first aid kits, that included variable trauma supplies- chest seals, tourniquets, and hemostatic dressings in a range of sizes, to four locations in Ukraine and related training in the use of these medical supplies to Ukrainian paramedics and first responders.

Supporting Medical Scholars at Risk from Ukraine: If you've been reading our monthly newsletters, you have a good sense of HUG's successful partnership with Jane Unrue and the Harvard Scholars at Risk (SAR) program, detailed in [Harvard Magazine](#), to launch an initiative that facilitates and funds clinical observerships at Harvard-affiliated hospitals. We have effectively secured opportunities for six such positions with excellent mentors from Brigham and Women's and Massachusetts General Hospitals (BWH and MGH, respectively). The clinical scholars, who are at various stages of completion, come from specialties that include anesthesiology, medical oncology, general surgery, family medicine, infectious disease, and surgical oncology. We are currently in process of selecting a Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon from Ukraine to work with a world-renowned expert at BWH. The need for expansion and improvement in this area of expertise will be ongoing in Ukraine for years to come.

Clinical Scholars at Risk: Regular newsletter readers also know that encompassed in our clinical SAR design are methods to maintain relationships between mentor and mentee, HUG clinical experts, and the many professionals with whom the Ukrainian doctors connect while they are in Boston. Similarly incorporated are systems and processes to support the implementation and dissemination of their acquired knowledge and skills back in Ukraine. Our first medical scholar, an anesthesiologist named Dr. Dariia Simchuk arrived in late September and returned in early February. Dr. Simchuk runs an educational platform called "[Progress](#)". Watch her "[exit](#)" interview that highlights much about her learning here, how she is already spreading that knowledge with colleagues and students back home, and her plans moving forward. A culminating moment for all of us was hosting a ceremony to acknowledge Dariia's achievements with a Certificate of Completion, and a public recognition of HUG's inaugural Ukrainian clinical scholar. The evening was deeply meaningful.





Transplant Initiative: Parallel to the Harvard-HUG initiative, HUG members helped support and secure housing for 13 clinical transplant team members who trained at MGH this past fall. Dr. Serguei Melnitchouk, a HUG founding member and an MGH Ukrainian-American cardiothoracic and transplant surgeon who has traveled to his home country during 2022, developed this plan in conjunction with the Ukrainian Ministry of Health (MOH) and Dr. Rudolf Myhovych of the Ukraine Christian Medical Association. The cohort of clinicians included pathologists, cardiologists, pulmonologists,



transplant surgeons, cardiothoracic surgeons, anesthesiologists, transfusionists, and administrators. The team was here from October through December and will now be able to successfully complete lung transplantations – a procedure that was largely outsourced abroad prior to this initiative. Check out [NPR's article](#) and [studio session](#) covering the Ukrainian Transplant Team.

Lviv Delegation: Through this process, a particular friendship and partnership has grown with a group known as [Unbroken](#) from Lviv. Being one of the safest locations in Ukraine currently, many hospitals and medical facilities from across the country transfer patients, both military and civilian, who have suffered amputations, burns, gender-based violence, and other incorrigible traumas to the National Rehabilitation Center at First Medical Association of Lviv. Their interventions and application of treatments have been expanding exponentially. The 3000-bed center is perpetually full these days, and they are actively engaged in fundraising to build a state-of-the-art center with greater capacity. One of the Unbroken team members is a psychiatrist who serves on our SAB. Given this deepening partnership, we hosted Dr. Oleh Brezeyuk and his Unbroken colleagues Dr. Oleh Samchuk and Maryanne Svirchuk in Boston as part of an intense tour of rehabilitative and other medical facilities throughout the United States, including military and veteran hospitals. The mutual sharing and growth were palpable during their visit stateside. While there is much follow up that will continue, the face-to-face meetings solidified our collaboration and commitment to help support training and expansion in rehabilitative medicine and reconstructive surgery in Ukraine.

Bidirectional Learning: As HUG has stated from the outset, we follow the lead of Ukrainian clinicians in communication with American and Ukrainian-American physicians. From the safety of the U.S., we can't imagine the daily lives of our colleagues -- horrors encountered, unrelenting shelling, interruptions to care provision and practice from loss of electricity and heat, exhaustion, and more demoralizing challenges. Their will to continue despite all of these hardships serves as inspiration, but also provides unique lessons. As Christina Duzyi Buniak, MD, MPH, a Ukrainian-American Maternal Fetal Medicine expert on our HUG team, stated recently "we have so much to learn from our Ukrainian colleagues who operate, deliver, and practice in extremely under-resourced conditions."

The depth of the newly formed relationships, coupled with systems that we have created for ongoing and regular communication, motivates us to continue building our team at HUG and collaborations with our US and Ukrainian colleagues. Together, we maintain the vision for a free, fair, and flourishing Ukrainian future, envisioning a healthcare system that is stronger and more resilient than before the war.





Kindness is Contagious

Another element discovered through the HUG work that has been especially moving is the fact that caring and compassion beget caring and compassion. One heartwarming example came in the form of outreach from the adult daughter of a host family following Thanksgiving. After visiting her mom Claire and her mom’s partner Ben, Kathryn Barker wanted to know how she and her community at the Peabody School in Charlottesville, Virginia could help. Kathryn had met Dr. Marchelina Gergi, a Ukrainian cardiologist from the transplant team who stayed with her mom and Ben for three months while studying at MGH. Kathryn was moved by the bond her mom had formed as well as the goals and objectives shared by Dr. Gergi, who added perogies and borscht to their Thanksgiving meal. Kathryn suspected that bringing the story back to her school colleagues, students, and parents in Charlottesville, where she is the Director of IT, would inspire her caring, value-based community rooted in social justice. Kathryn was right!

The youngest students rallied to write thank you notes to the Ukrainian doctors from the transplant team for their visit to the U.S. and their motivation to save lives of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel. Older students held a T-shirt design contest with two finalists that were then sold throughout the community. They raised enough to pay for a desperately needed bronchoscope for the Ukrainian transplant team. The brand-new piece of crucial equipment has been put to work continuously to diagnose specific lung diseases, prepare the lungs of both the donor and recipient during a transplant, and treat war-related conditions as illustrated by the removal of shrapnel seen on this [video](#). Not only did Kathryn carry the inspiration from meeting Marchelina forward to her community to work together to give back, the Peabody school model has sparked the interest of other grassroots



efforts at similar communities to raise funds for HUG and GMKA. The story rings of the adage “... and they told two friends...” who, in turn, told two additional friends, and so on. Because Claire and Ben were gracious and warm enough to open their home and their hearts to host a Ukrainian clinical guest, Kathryn also met Marchelina and was moved to contribute by rallying her socially-minded community to give as well, and additional communities are now mirroring efforts of the Peabody School.

If you are part of a community interested in holding a similar grassroots fundraiser, please contact us at healukrainegroupteam@gmail.com and our team will work with you on the details and approach.

Expression and Funding through the Sharing of Art:

In December, HUG held an art showcase and fundraiser sharing the original art work of Ukrainian artists made in reflection of the ongoing war. The afternoon was wonderful, the original art work of Ukrainian artists housed in a brilliant and elegant setting of the Restaurant 53 in downtown Manhattan. The rooms were filled with great music, wine, perogies, and delightful company in support of medical relief efforts to Ukraine. Over \$15,000 was raised with half of proceeds sent to the Ukrainian artists, and the other half used to fulfill requests for medical supplies by Ukrainian clinicians treating military personnel and civilians impacted by the war.





Looking Forward to 2023 and 2024

The HUG team and its many collaborators are realistic. The war with Russia is likely to continue for some time. Ukraine and its courageous healthcare workers will need our ongoing support. HUG looks forward to continuing to build our collaborative and productive relationships with GMKA, Autism Unity, LCMAU, HTWB, Analog Devices, and Harvard University, to replenish urgently needed surgical and medical equipment along with provision of educational materials and opportunities directly to clinicians serving patients in Ukraine. We would like to thank our donors for your generosity, together, with our partners, we raised over \$400,000 for medical relief efforts to Ukraine over the year.

Please find below highlighted efforts from the past year, in collaboration with partner NGOs and colleagues:

GMKA facilitates the creation of evidence-based educational materials for physicians and patients that are written and vetted by experts in the fields of trauma, surgery, emergency medicine, and oncology. While the work of GMKA pre-dated the war, the shift since Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine has been to focus predominately on medical relief efforts. GMKA develops and distributes educational materials in the Ukrainian language that are most needed by patients and professionals in this time of crisis. From over the year GMKA poured effort into the following achievements:

Translation and dissemination of the advanced trauma life support (ATLS) manual into Ukrainian facilitating better approaches to the treatment of trauma patients and ensure optimum care is provided.

Translated CBRN (chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear) manual for physicians into Ukrainian.

Created a range of videos on CBRN safety, protection from trafficking, videos on chest tube/cric/tourniquet placements, and Stop the Bleed in Ukrainian (covered by the [Washington Post](#)).

Created trauma articles (short, most important information) written by BWH/MGH trauma surgeons and translated in Ukrainian.

Created an app (HealUA) connecting Ukrainian physicians with each other and physicians in other countries for peer-to-peer consultation.

Autism Unity provides needed materials and equipment to support kids with autism and their families in Ukraine, including the delivery of laptops fully loaded with appropriate therapeutic curricula and programs as mentioned in previous newsletters. Through donations from the charitable art exhibit "Colors of Peace", a rehabilitation camp run by a [trusted center](#) in Ukraine where 12 families received needed psychological support, and a peaceful environment for the kids to feel the simple joys and pleasures of childhood. Coordination of a range of workshops and outdoor activities granted children the needed space and activity to make memories of happiness again, which contributed to the development of social and household skills, along with general knowledge of the environment and body.

Thank you for considering a donation:

<https://www.gofundme.com>



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