

# Heal Ukraine Group

March 2023 Newsletter



In Collaboration  
with:



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

More than a year has passed since Russia's widespread invasion of neighboring Ukraine, sending missiles, and rolling tanks, killing many and displacing millions, entirely disrupting the lives of Ukrainians throughout the country. Russia's relentless attacks on medical institutions and healthcare facilities have pushed Ukraine's healthcare delivery to the brink. According to reports by Physicians for Human Rights, one in ten of Ukraine's hospitals have been directly damaged by the attacks and one in three Ukrainians experienced lack of access to medical services. Even in the circumstances of war, healthcare must be systemically available to the people of Ukraine.

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.*



## Autism Unity Expands Technology Initiative

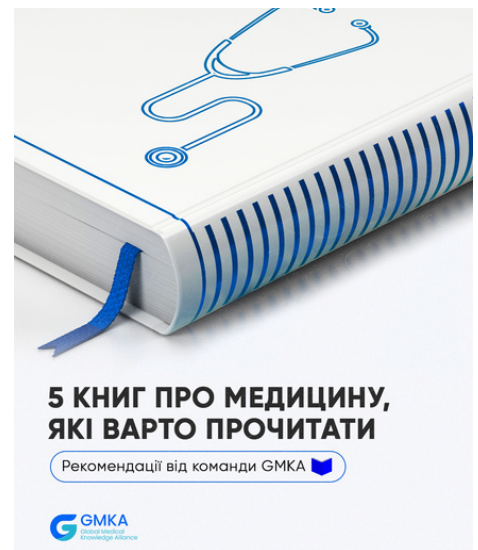
Autism Unity is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that works to address the mental health crisis affecting Ukrainians, especially the well-being of families and children with autism. In an effort to provide needed therapeutic services and support for Ukrainian families and children with autism affected by the war, Autism Unity has sent and continues to procure laptops able to electronically connect families with autism support centers and specialists. More than 180 laptops were collected and 111 are now in the hands of families in Ukraine, providing the needed foundation to support mental health and the development of their children. Thank you to Analog Devices, Inc. for donating 110 laptops for this initiative.

For further expansion of the Autism Unity initiative to bring technology and therapeutic services to Ukrainian families, the non-profit organization recently developed a proposal that has been accepted and is currently under review by the United Nation's Global Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC), WHO, Child Protection Cluster, Ukrainian Charitable Fund Child with the Future, and Association of Parents of Children with Autism of Ukraine. The proposal aims to implement an online registration system for families and professionals to ascertain support needs, create, maintain, and grow a secure online platform for providing essential services to children with autism and their families disrupted by the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine. Through these connections, families at remote locations are able to access trauma-informed mental health care and resources from professionals throughout the country. Autism Unity is working with a team of local Ukrainian IT specialists who have already put together a working prototype for potential use by physicians and other medical clinicians.



## GMKA Delivers Digital Solutions to Ukraine

GMKA's overarching objective is to educate physicians and laypeople in Ukraine, working to translate evidence based and peer-reviewed medical resources into Ukrainian and share these resources on their online platform for all to access. Recent projects in translation include: the "Deployed Medicine" guidelines for military surgeons and expert resources on pre- and post- treatment care, like diagnosis and supportive care, for a variety of cancers. Now in the hands of Ukrainian clinicians on the frontlines, Ukrainian physicians are better able to deliver quality trauma treatment and care as the "Deployed Medicine" guidelines contain the most up-to-date information on the surgical care and operative treatment of trauma injuries. Further, as a main focus of their work, GMKA pours effort to support cancer care during the war. In conjunction with the companies Accenture and Palantir, GMKA is developing modern digital solutions to improve the quality of treatment of oncological diseases. The organization's joint work and collaborative efforts will result in an analytical platform to evaluate data directly from the electronic Health system. The advantage of this approach is the creation of user-friendly dashboards that provide transparent assessments and recommendations based on guideline concordant care, wait times, treatment pathways, survival, and compliance with the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. It is expected that high-quality data analytics in the field of oncology will become an important prerequisite for increasing the effectiveness of the Ukrainian oncologic care system during the war and after the Ukrainian victory.



## The Harvard Medical Scholars at Risk (SAR) Program

After a year of unpredictability and with the war showing no signs of end, much remains in the air for medical institutions and facilities, burnt-out clinicians, and especially, chronic patients whose access to adequate care has been completely disrupted by Russia's targeted attacks on healthcare infrastructure. As Oleksandra Matviichuk, who recently won the Nobel Peace prize for pioneering human rights work in Ukraine, has highlighted, the systematic destruction of healthcare facilities is part of Russian military strategy. None of these attacks are accidental and they follow in a series of systemic attacks as seen in other areas of Russian occupation.

HUG directs all its efforts to rebuild and revitalize healthcare in Ukraine, in a sense, as a part of a counterattack to Russia's war crimes and deliberate targeting of Ukraine's healthcare system. We have supported medical relief efforts, directly supplying specifically requested and direly needed medical equipment to physicians on the frontlines fortifying their ability to continue to treat patients, both acute and chronic; providing telehealth services to the people of Ukraine, helping to sustain access to essential healthcare services; and medical education, bringing opportunities for Ukrainian medical clinicians to study in Boston through the medical SAR program, granting an avenue to gain new knowledge and skills, disseminate this to colleagues back in Ukraine, and build networks for global collaboration, all to protect healthcare now and long-term.

**Please find below a story on the second scholar to complete her observership through the SAR program:**

Dr. Veronika Patsko is a medical oncologist from the National Cancer Institute of Ukraine, who's been in practice for five years. She came to Boston, primarily to study Gastrointestinal (GI) malignancies, observing pre- and post-treatment management for cancer patients, learning additional evidence-based practices toward establishing solutions for complications of oncological care exacerbated by the war. Dr. Veronika mentions the biggest problem, "a lot of people don't have access to medical care, any type, including oncological care. [Now] a lot of patients come with advanced diseases, which is also an issue. For malignant tumors, the earlier you diagnosed and start treatment, the better... and quicker results." For specialties treating chronic conditions, these issues are prominent. Patients' access to continued and adequate care is disrupted, either by lack of nearby hospitals, surges of acute and severe patient needs overwhelming shortage of staff, and lack of required medication and supplies to continue treatment.

For over six weeks, Dr. Patsko learned under the mentorship of Dr. David Ryan at Massachusetts General Hospital's (MGH) Cancer Center, building relationships, exchanging experiences and knowledge, and garnering ideas that were mutually beneficial for both Veronika and the team at MGH. Despite her primary focus to learn of GI malignancies, at the end of her observership, Dr. Patsko had a new focus that she brings back to Ukraine- patient education. She says, "[The] first thing to do is to provide patients with approved information on their health, medical resources. Giving education to patients... to know [the] science and symptoms. [And] if you probably have cancer, to diagnose in early stages, so that we can prevent having advanced diseases." Thanks to her observership in Boston, seeing patients asking informed questions, expressing concerns that stem from advanced knowledge of their conditions, and witnessing deeper conversations that pushed patients to pursue needed treatment earlier and faster, Dr. Patsko feels certain that this model and approach will benefit people in Ukraine, fostering an understanding, for example, about why early diagnosis is important and of what symptoms to be aware. Dr. Patsko also mentioned the network she now has as she returns to Ukraine: "Networking is highly important, and after that, if you have these connections, these contacts, you can develop anything: research or a tumor board or educational webinars, it is very important. [This is] the most important of medical society, it does not matter the specialty."



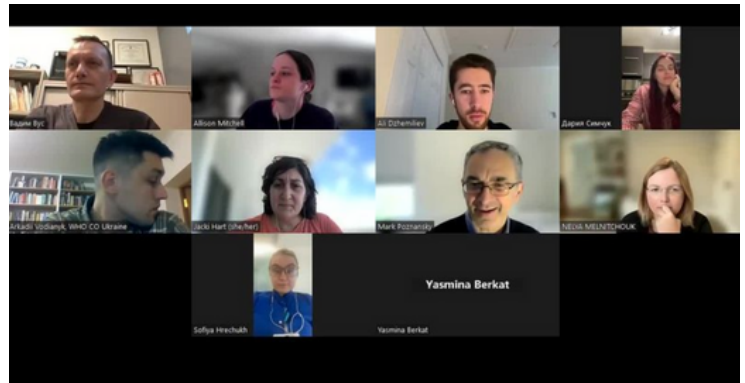
*Dr. Patsko and Dr. David Ryan, Chief Hematology/Oncology & Clinical Director at Mass General Cancer Center*



Dr. Veronika Patsko's celebratory dinner with the Ukrainian scholars of the SAR program and the SAR team. The dinner was a delight, we engaged in conversation, sharing personal preferences for food, hatred for raw oysters and our tolerance for spicy food. We asked about motivators in life, what pushes us to keep moving forward, and deliberated the work to be done to support Ukraine and the country's future following the war. From the right corner, to left- Dr. Nelya Melnitchouk, co-founder of GMKA and the Medical SAR program; Dr. Inesa Huivanuik, Ukrainian Surgical Oncologist; Dr. Ali Dzhemiliev, Ukrainian General Surgeon and Research Fellow; Dr. Patsko's Host Family; Dr. Veronika Patsko, Ukrainian Oncologist; Dr. Vadym Vus, Ukrainian Family Doctor; Allison Mitchell, SAR team member; Yasmina Berkat, HUG team member; Dr. Sofiya Hrechukh, Ukrainian Psychiatrist; Dr. Mark Poznansky, co-founder of HUG and the Medical SAR program; Jane Unrue, Director of the Harvard SAR program.

### Ukrainian Scholar Monthly Meeting

A monthly meeting between the SAR team and Ukrainian scholars of the SAR program ensures continued discussion with all Ukrainian scholars of the program and grants new networks for present and future collaboration. Through these meetings, the SAR team discusses current logistical issues that need resolving and potential approaches to systemic solutions for healthcare delivery and medical care in Ukraine.



For more information please visit the [Harvard SAR website](#)

## Harvard-HUG (Heal Ukraine Group) Ukrainian Clinical Scholars Speak about Healthcare Challenges in Ukraine and Share their Experiences

Please join us at an upcoming panel event with the Ukrainian scholars of the SAR program.

**Monday April 3rd**

**4:30-6:00PM**

**S010, Tsai Auditorium**

**CGIS South, 1730 Cambridge Street**

[Link to livestream](#)



Co-founder of GMKA, Dr. Nelya Melnitchouk is included in #STATUSList 2023 - the list of leaders in the field of medicine and health sciences, annually announced by [statnews](#).

Overall, this year the award will go to 46 public opinion leaders who have made significant contributions to the development of their industry.

The award will be held on May 10th at the STATUS List Celebration Dinner in Boston (USA). Congratulations to Dr. Melnitchouk!



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 [info@healukrainegroup.org](mailto:info@healukrainegroup.org) 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, and Lake Country Aid Concert fundraisers.

Thank you for considering a donation:

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



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