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Meeting report

I International scientific and practical conference “Doctors and nursing – medical front in Ukraine and the world”

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On May 11–12, 2023, the I International Scientific Practical Conference “Doctors and Nursing – Medical Front in Ukraine and the World” took place in Lutsk, Ukraine. The conference was dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (SSS).

The conference was organized by the Municipal Institution of Higher Education Volyn Medical Institute of Volyn Region Council, in collaboration with Danylo Halytsky Lviv National Medical University, I.Y. Horbachevsky Ternopil National Medical University, Vilnius University (Lithuania), Higher Private Educational Institution Lviv Medical University, the Shevchenko Scientific Society, and Health Tech Without Borders (Switzerland, USA). The conference was held with the support of the State Institution “Center for Nursing Development of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine”. Partners in conference organization also included Volyn Orthodox Theological Academy, Maastricht University (the Netherlands), Volyn Region Emergency Medical Center and Disaster Medicine Municipal Enterprise, German-Ukrainian Association of Nurses, Neanderkliniek Harzwald (Germany), “Myloserdia” Association of Volyn Nurses PO and Lviv Association of Allergists, Immunologists, and Rehabilitologists Charitable Organization.

During the course of the event, a total of over 100 speeches were delivered by medical scientists and practicing physicians, as well as researchers in diverse disciplines from Ukraine, the United States, Great Britain, Poland, Lithuania, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Workshops were conducted on relevant issues in medical practice in times of war.

A total of approximately 1100 individuals participated in the conference, comprising physicians from diverse disciplines and nurses, emergency medical professionals and disaster medicine specialists, scientific and pedagogical personnel, employees of the State Emergency Service, physical rehabilitation specialists, psychologists, representatives of the clergy and public organizations, and young scientists.

A new interdisciplinary format of scientific dialogue has been started between representatives of medical and nursing specialties, the education sector, psychologists, and clergy. It helps find ways to address relevant issues in the medical sector in complex conditions of the present day.

Keywords: Medicine in wartime, psychological and physical rehabilitation, emergency medical aid, combat trauma, education in times of war, medical chaplaincy.

The conference opened at the Palace of Culture in the city of Lutsk, with the participation of representatives from the clergy, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, local authorities, and the Shevchenko Scientific Society.

The speakers at the conference were: Professor Valentyna Chopyak (Lviv, Ukraine), Associate Professor Tetyana Pastryk (Lutsk, Ukraine), Academician Volodymyr Kovalenko (Kyiv, Ukraine), Professor Ihor Trutiak (Lviv, Ukraine), Doctor of Economic Sciences Viktor Korsak (Lutsk, Ukraine), Professor Oksana Zayachkivska and David Omut (Signal Hill, California, USA), Expert of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine Nataliia Ostropelets (Kyiv, Ukraine), Senior Advisor to the Ministry of Health of Lithuania Marius Ciurlionis (Vilnius, Lithuania), Professor Andrii Yagensky (Lutsk, Ukraine), Professor Larysa Zasiiekina (Lutsk, Ukraine), Professor Armen Gasparyan (Birmingham, UK), Doctor of Medicine Boris Hait (Unna, Germany), Doctor Martina Röder (Thuringia, Germany), Professor Olha Holubovska (Kyiv, Ukraine), Professor Adrian Fil (Lutsk, Ukraine), PhD candidate Olga Gershuni (Maastricht, the Netherlands), Professor Vasyl Lonchyna (Chicago, USA), Professor Oleksandr Filts (Lviv, Ukraine), Professor Yurii Fedorov (Lviv, Ukraine), Professor Arsen Hudyma (Ternopil, Ukraine), Professor Andrii Bazylevych (Lviv, Ukraine), Doctor Oksana Souter (Zurich, Switzerland), Professor Roman Novobilskyi (Krakow, Poland), Chief Chaplain of the Operational Command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Serhiy Dmytriev (Kyiv, Ukraine), Professor Nataliia Istomina (Vilnius, Lithuania), Professor Maria Marushchak (Ternopil, Ukraine), Professor Borys Kuzminov (Lviv, Ukraine), MD Ihor Hayduchok (Lviv, Ukraine), Professor Yuriy Valetskyi (Lutsk, Ukraine), Professor Larysa Kostiuhenko (Lviv, Ukraine), Professor Anastasiia Bondarenko (Kyiv, Ukraine), Professor Ivan Kravchenko (Kyiv, Ukraine), MD Svitlana Zubchenko (Lviv, Ukraine), and others.

The conference had two plenary sessions – “Present Challenges in the Field of Healthcare” and “Development of Medical Care and Education in the Conditions of War.” The six sectional meetings were fascinating and were dedicated to the following topics: “Nursing and Education in Wartime,” “Medicine and Society in a Time of Emergency”, “Infection-Related Medical Aid in Modern Times”, “Medical Care during Wartime”, “Psychological and Physical Rehabilitation,” and “Current Issues in Clinical Medicine during War.”



Figure 1. Work of the sectional meeting “Infectious medical care in modern conditions.”

Distinguished scientists and researchers from Ukraine, the United States, and Europe gave important reports at the plenary and sectional sessions of the conference.

Tetyana Pastryk, Associate Professor, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Lutsk, Ukraine), in her speech “Nursing: Transformation and Development Perspectives,” highlighted the main stages of the formation of Volyn Medical Institute: from the paramedical obstetric school (1944) to the higher education institution, which is a center of medical education in Volyn. The institution has achieved its goal of introducing a two-level education in nursing (2002 – Bachelor’s Program, 2022 – Master’s Program). The process of preparing specialists based on the Educational professional Program Emergency Medicine/Paramedic and Clinical Psychology at the initial (Bachelor) level of higher education has commenced. To borrow experience, an international partnership has been established with higher education institutions in the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, etc.

Valentyna Chopyak, Professor, full member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Lviv, Ukraine), presented a report entitled “Cluster and Supracluster Assistance to Immunological, Allergological, and Rheumatological Patients in Modern Conditions.” According to the speaker, in addition to primary immunodeficiencies (PID), severe autoimmune, allergic, and immunoproliferative forms pose a significant threat to early mortality in children and young people, affecting the overall quality indicators of healthcare in every country. Hence, people with PID, systemic and organ-specific autoimmune, as well as allergic diseases, require clear cluster and supracluster assistance, specialized treatment, and immunization with state support. The speaker said that the Western Ukrainian Interregional Medical Center of Clinical Immunology and Allergology actively ensures the provision of various types of medical aid to these patients, including early diagnosis based on state-partnership cooperation to find diseases similar to those in the Western Ukrainian Interregional Medical Center. The professor shared her experience with managing patients with multisystem inflammatory syndrome (Kawasaki-like) under conditions of COVID-19 using intravenous and subcutaneous immunoglobulins, as well as her experience with high-dose antihistamine drugs with titration schemes in the management of allergy patients. The specialist called for expanding the training of immunologists, allergologists, rheumatologists, and nurses for medical institutions and implementing a registry of immunopathologies in accordance with European standards. She also urged to adapt cluster and supracluster care for these patient categories in war conditions, actively support state and regional programs for their guaranteed treatment, particularly “Rare Diseases” and “Accessible Medications”.

Professor Andriy Yagensky (Lutsk, Ukraine), in his report “Providing Assistance in Case of Myocardial Infarction and Stroke: Contemporary Achievements,” stated that the main task in the treatment of these diseases is the organization of interventional cardiology departments with intensive care wards and angiographic laboratories for patients with myocardial infarction, and for the treatment of patients with ischemic stroke – the organization of departments with intensive care wards and computer tomography. The professor meticulously outlined the patients’ pathophysiology following an ischemic stroke, indicating the total duration of ischemia. Andriy Yagensky provided detailed information on the organization of the reperfusion network in Ukraine, which allowed for improved dynamics of coronary stenting in Volyn region. The professor announced a project called “Prognosis for patients after a myocardial infarction in different socio-economic conditions, death in 3.5 years.” It was found that in Ukraine, the mortality rate was 14.6%, in Switzerland – 4.6%, and in Poland – 8.5%. The speaker provided in-depth explanations of the treatment specifics. Notably, the professor devoted a considerable amount of attention to the significance of nurses in preventing and treating acute coronary and cerebral circulation disorders.

Professor Armen Gasparyan, who is a member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Birmingham, UK), said in his report “Refugee Health: Joint Efforts of Doctors and Nurses” that the main problem with the health of refugees is the unpredictable migration of women, children, and older and senior people. Also, the Covid-19 pandemic is making it hard to solve these issues. Special consideration must be given to vaccinating refugee children against measles and other infectious diseases. The speaker mentioned that the most common diseases among refugees were tuberculosis, hepatitis B, C, and HIV, so medical professionals carefully examined the medical history of refugees to avoid increased morbidity. One-third of refugees suffer from uncontrollable manifestations of anger, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. The rehabilitation specialists ought to prioritize the treatment of these symptoms. The lecturer discussed refugee children and the reproductive health of refugee women and girls. The professor noted that certain refugees may carry tuberculosis or have diabetes. Psycho-somatic and psychological help from professionals and rehabilitation doctors is the best way to address the issue of refugee health.

Vasyl Lonchyna, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Chicago, USA), in his report “Education in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy in the World,” highlighted the topic of rehabilitation medicine and education in the field of physiotherapy and its evolution. As per Vasyl Lonchyna, there have been alterations in the philosophy and educational curriculum in physical therapy during the 2020s. These modifications include transitioning to patient-centered diagnostics and shifting from the traditional teacher-authority to the teacher-facilitator teaching model. Therefore, the School of Rehabilitation Medicine was established at the Ukrainian Catholic University, where students can obtain a Master’s degree in physical therapy or occupational therapy. The speaker concluded that rehabilitation required a multidisciplinary team effort, and physical rehabilitation should always be a central part of any help.

Silvia Böhme (Thuringia, Germany), Head of the Academy of Medical and Nursing Professions at the Neanderklinik Harzwald and Deputy Chair at the German-Ukrainian Nurses Association, stated in her report, “Institutions for Medical Support of Patients from Ukraine in the German Inpatient Medicine Sector,” that refugees from Ukraine in

Germany had access to statutory health insurance (GKV) and the full range of services provided by statutory health insurance. Refugees who don't need medical help under SGBII or SGBXII are eligible for voluntary conclusion of health insurance agreements. In her report, the speaker talked about the possibility of German doctors working in the war zone, explained the main aspects of Germany's assistance, informed about medical humanitarian supplies for Ukraine, and strong support for on-site medical treatment. A particular emphasis has been placed on the rights of refugees who require assistance and are facing financial challenges ("Care Assistance" service under the Law "On Social Assistance" (SGB XII), as well as on the mechanisms designed to assist individuals without health insurance.

MD Boris Hait, Head of the Christian Clinic in Unna, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Unna, Germany), stated in his report, "Palliative Medicine: Improving the Quality of Life of Patients as a Social Problem," that the increase in the number of elderly people means that medical services are needed to provide quality, efficient, and empathetic care for people in the last stage of life. There is currently a mismatch between the desired and the reality: Palliative & Comfort Care instead of high-tech medicine. The speaker emphasized the imperatives for healthcare institutions, specifically to actively seek opportunities to establish a service system that considers the medical needs and preferences of the elderly. It is worth considering the available service forms: at home or in nursing homes, daycare facilities, and hospices. The solution to such large-scale problems cannot be achieved by medical institutions alone and requires the participation of the entire society. The significant concept of "Caring Community" has been elaborated for Ukraine, aimed at fostering solidarity within the society during times of war.

PhD candidate Olga Gershuni (Maastricht, Netherlands), in her report "Nursing Education in the Netherlands," provided information about the system of training nurses in the Netherlands. The country has a two-year Master's program called Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP), which involves obtaining a degree for bachelor nurses. As per the prescribed curriculum, the training for a Bachelor's degree in nursing lasts four or two and a half years for the dual program (wherein education and employment are integrated for certified nurses). The "Nursing Practice – Technical Aspects" program combines nursing practice with surgical or anesthesia nursing skills. The student obtains two qualifications. It's possible to combine these qualifications because the subjects and skills of both directions are connected. Students can choose a curriculum within the Bachelor's program that will expand their knowledge of general topics or deepen their knowledge in professional activities. Under the elective subjects, students are offered the following courses: nursing leadership, international project, oncology, intensive therapy, motherhood-childhood-youth, misunderstandings in behavior, and friendly thinking with consideration of age-specific features. The speaker presented chatbots for tactical medical assistance from Health Tech Without Borders.

Oksana Souter, Doctor, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Zurich, Switzerland), in her report "Volunteer Activities of Ukrainian Medical Professionals in Switzerland, Germany, and the United Kingdom," spoke about the cooperation of German, Swiss, and British organizations providing assistance to Ukraine. The doctor emphasized that to achieve efficacious volunteer work, it is imperative to assist medical professionals and nurses, as well as medical students from Ukraine who temporarily reside in Switzerland, Germany, and Great Britain. It is equally important to establish connections between medical associations and volunteer organizations and achieve consolidation among them. The spokesperson announced the organization of two-week internship courses for Ukrainian doctors at the University of Oxford, which aim to deepen medical knowledge and improve skills. Oksana Souter devoted considerable attention to establishing partnerships with diaspora and religious groups, which have been assisting Ukraine and its displaced people since the war started.

Oksana Zayachkivska, Professor, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society, and David Omut (Signal-Hill, California, USA), in their report "Interprofessional Communication in Healthcare: 5R Method," shared their experience in training professionals at the American University of Health Sciences (California, USA), which has three schools: the School of Nursing, the School of Pharmacy, and the Medical School, which apply a new method during training called "Interprofessional Communication –Interprofessional Education" (IPE) and collaboration practice. The 5R principle is at the heart of interdisciplinary communication, and it includes: 1. Refocus – changing the paradigm of learning one speciality without "immersion" in medical reality; 2. Role responsibilities – the role of duties; 3. Respect – respect for each participant – together to the goal as one team; 4. Reflect – improving the quality of patient-centered healthcare; 5. Reduce inefficiency – reducing inefficient use of available resources. Ukrainian medical students express an interest in pursuing studies through this methodology.

Oleksandr Filts, Professor, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Lviv, Ukraine), in his presentation "Ukrainian Initiatives in Psychotherapy during the Time of War," spoke about initiatives in the field of mental health during the war, with a detailed focus on the story of the conceptual platform that has been functioning for eight years

and involves the creation of a secure transition space. The lecturer explained that the concept of the need for treatment and rehabilitation of ATO soldiers was formed at the Lviv Regional Clinical Psychiatric Hospital in 2014–2015. The speaker talked about a project that used to function in 2015 called “RADist” (Joy), which helped 800 kids whose parents were killed or seriously hurt in the ATO. The speaker also emphasized another approach, referred to as a “double” method, which involves combining treatment and diagnosis based on both biological psychiatry and psychodynamic therapy for each individual patient. The professor analyzed the specifics of stationary treatment for addicts and discussed a weekly support group (up to 90 people) of Ukrainian psychotherapists at St. Panteleimon Hospital in Lviv, Ukraine. The professor noted that constructing a safe transitional space is the unifying concept for all the projects. The speaker described numerous practical initiatives of the Ukrainian Association of Psychotherapists.



Figure 2. Speech by Oleksandr Filts, Professor, SSS member

Ihor Trutiak, Professor and member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society (Lviv, Ukraine), in his presentation, “Combat Trauma in Modern Conditions,” thoroughly analyzed the types of combat injuries. The speaker provided details about the distribution of injuries by localization, namely: head – 31.9%, neck – 1.9%, spine – 1.1%, abdomen – 7.3%, pelvis – 2.6%, blood vessels – 7.3%, and the most frequent – limb injuries – 62.5%. The limbs require a considerable number of surgical procedures and cosmetic surgeries, the manufacture of prosthetics, their adaptation, and the rehabilitation of the injured. The professor discussed the methods, techniques, and approaches to treating combat wounds and the successful combination of treatment techniques introduced in Ukraine with the techniques used by doctors from the United States and the United Kingdom who come to provide assistance to Ukrainian doctors in saving the lives of wounded. At the end of his speech, Ihor Trutiak said that the final V level of medical help is the rehabilitation stage for those wounded by firearms with limb injuries. The latter successfully use a multidisciplinary approach in treating and rehabilitating the wounded.



Figure 3. During the plenary session. Speech by Ihor Trutiak, Professor, SSS member

Marius Čiurlionis, Senior Advisor at the Ministry of Health of Lithuania (Vilnius, Lithuania), shared his experience organizing long-term care in his report, “The Growing Role of Long-term Care: Lithuanian Model.” The advisor mentioned that each municipality had a team providing home care services. Simultaneously, approximately a thousand daycare centers have been established nationwide to provide medical assistance to patients. This contributes to the patient’s family being able to return to a normal rhythm of life. The speaker explained that there are two types of accommodation for older people in Lithuania: nursing homes, where a patient can stay for 120 days, and social assistance institutions, which provide services if the patient has exhausted their time in the nursing home. In this institution, a patient can stay on a paid basis for an unlimited time. Patients with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia are given special care. Communication with the families of mentally ill patients is essential for success. In this case, the family is offered financial help. Under the “Vacation” program, the family can leave a mentally ill family member in medical service centers and not worry about their health. Municipalities organize training for volunteers who care for mentally ill patients and offer accommodation to volunteers who express a desire to work in rural areas with mentally ill people.

Seven workshops particularly interested doctors, nurses, and students: “Providing First Psychological Aid in Extreme Situations”, “Emergency Conditions in Practical Medicine”, “Substitute Immunoglobulin Therapy: Cooperation of Patients, Nurses, and Doctors”, “Experience of Monoclonal Antibody Therapy in Rheumatological Patients”, “Modern Laboratory Diagnostics in the Provision of Medical Care”, “Hereditary Angioedema: the Role of a Nurse in Joint Patient Management”, and “Basic Resuscitation Measures, Restoration of Airway Patency”.



Figure 4. During the conference opening, the job of the event partner was assigned to the medical laboratory “Esculab”

Conference attendees demonstrated a noteworthy interest in the workshop titled “Modern Laboratory Diagnostics in the Provision of Medical Care” involving the conference partner, “Esculab” Laboratory. The workshop was led by Associate Professor, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society, Khrystyna Lishchuk-Yakymovych, Associate Professor Vira Haievska, and Assistant, member of the Shevchenko Scientific Society Olha Tolokh. The speakers presented the audience with an exciting and accessible introduction to express testing as a marker of modern medical achievements. The discussion was focused on HIV and Covid-19, which have had the biggest impact on the planet in the past decade. The importance of early diagnosis was highlighted, which helps prevent severe complications and early mortality in these patients. This kind of diagnostic approach permits the prompt administration of antiviral treatment. The importance of preparing patients for biomaterial collection was also emphasized. The workshop attendees were provided with information regarding the significance of contemporary laboratory diagnostics in providing medical care. They also conducted an analysis of cases of systemic vasculitis, examined laboratory changes in patients with such diseases, and received information on comprehensive laboratory recommendations. Specific laboratory screening of patients with manifestations of vasculitis allows for early diagnosis of ANCA-associated

vasculitis, and timely verification of the diagnosis and initiation of therapy is the key to long-term remission in adult patients. The early detection of sarcoidosis is a critical issue for practical doctors of various branches, which was thoroughly covered in the report. The Eskulab laboratory actively supported the conference and organized excellent stands, informational quizzes, and prizes for participants.

It was an absolute novelty of the conference to integrate the psychotherapeutic mission of clergy into the context of legislative initiatives on the implementation of “medical chaplaincy.” The onset of hostilities in Ukraine in 2014 saw the gradual development of the “military chaplaincy” institution, and after the full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation, a law “On military chaplaincy service” was adopted, regulating the position of a “military chaplain” in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine and other military formations. The issue of rehabilitating military personnel following injury or captivity, rehabilitating the civilian population following the consequences of missile strikes, captivity or occupation, overcoming the consequences of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), adjusting to society for military personnel and civilians following forced limb amputation, and addressing the psychological-emotional state of doctors and medical personnel necessitate the coordination of diverse efforts by representatives from medicine, scientific institutions, and clerical sector. Pastoral care is about caring for people’s medical needs and meeting their spiritual and religious needs. This should follow current international standards and consider local cultural traditions and current problems.

As part of the conference, a laboratory was opened in the name of Volodymyr Chopyak, the founder of the endocrinological service in Volyn. During the conference, participants took part in a charitable campaign to support the Armed Forces of Ukraine, “Medical Professionals for Victory.”

The conferences’ resolution noted that the escalating conflict had brought fresh obstacles and exacerbated the financial strain on the Ukrainian healthcare system. In this regard, there is a need to look at the status of nurses and junior medical specialists with medical education. Considering the role and position of nursing representatives in the healthcare systems of Western countries, there are reasonable grounds for increasing their role in Ukraine. It is planned that the foundations for enhancing the role of nursing will be embedded into state legislation.

Supplementary Materials: The recordings of the participants’ speeches are available on the YouTube channel of Volyn Medical Institute: <https://www.youtube.com/@vmivolyn>.