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Current news

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The work of an allergist and scientist during the full-scale war in Ukraine

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The article provides a brief description of the heroic work of Ukrainian physicians- volunteers, including allergists, during Russia's brutal war against Ukraine. Examples of the evacuation of Ukrainian residents, including patients with bronchial asthma, respiratory allergies, COVID-19 and other diseases that worsened under the influence of stress, are given. It is briefly described about the destroyed hospitals throughout the territory of Ukraine. In such a critical situation, Ukrainian doctors continue to provide assistance to patients, improve their scientific level, each in his place does everything to Victory. The light will defeat the darkness!

Keywords: War in Ukraine, allergists-volunteers, respiratory allergy.



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Introduction

On February 24, 2022, Russia invaded peaceful Ukraine. The first hours and days of the war were a real shock and hell for the civilian population of my country. Under constant shelling, thousands of people left their homes, taking only documents, very few important possessions, pets and went on foot, by cars, buses, and trains to get to safer places where there was less bombing - to the western regions of Ukraine and Europe.

Results

Lviv, a city in western Ukraine, received thousands of refugees every night and every day. There were patients with allergic problems among them. It is impossible even now to describe my duty as a volunteer doctor at the station without tears (Figure 1). But then, in the first days of the war, no one cried. I wonder where we got that strength. Doctors-allergists provided non-stop help to people with asthma, which was clearly stress-induced [5-6]. Some asthmatics did not have time or could not (due to destroyed houses) take the necessary drugs with them. We provided them with first aid for seizures and gave them free medicine with them on the road. Some patients with respiratory allergies, who were evacuated in trains and buses crowded with people and animals, had an exacerbation of their pathology. They were also given necessary medical care. The evacuation happened during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus many adults and children with a temperature and confirmed positive tests taken at the stations remained under the supervision of physicians in temporary shelters in Lviv, however, many were hospitalized...



Figure 1. Volunteer-doctors at the central railway station, Lviv, Ukraine (photo by Viktoria Andreyeva)

And then there was the border with Poland, and the wind, the sleet and the rain; people were standing in endless lines to cross the border and flee to the west. This sight was not for the faint of heart. Thanks to the great work of volunteers, first of all, to local residents from the villages of the Lviv region, Polish volunteers, doctors from Lviv who fed the refugees, gave out hot drinks, provided medical assistance. Small children from orphanages and elderly people (bedridden and unable to move on their own) were simply carried across the border in the arms of volunteers or on the stretchers [7]. When I handed over crying children in the whistling blizzards in the field next to Ughryniv border into the hands of Polish volunteers, I had the impression that I was tearing away a piece of something very dear from my heart - a piece of the future...

Today, a full-scale war has been going on in Ukraine for 8 months. Allergists, who remained in Lviv work, run to bomb shelters with patients during air raids. The origin of patients has also changed - they are mainly people from the eastern, central and southern regions of Ukraine. We have established a continuous ACIT - this is an opportunity to purchase an injectable form of an allergy vaccine, receive a one-time maintenance dose or switch to a sublingual form

for those who have stopped in Europe. After 3-4 months (in July and August), part of the patients temporarily returned to Lviv to undergo consultations with allergists and further prescriptions for treatment. Unfortunately, a larger number of patients, especially children, will continue to leave Ukraine, as staying in the damp rooms of basements and bomb shelters has increased the exacerbation of asthma, rhinitis and eczema several times. Now, many military personnel are also applying, who are receiving consultations, and if necessary, laboratory and instrumental testing. Ukrainian allergists fulfil their professional and patriotic duty on their professional front. We are bringing our victory closer together.

In total, as of September, according to the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, and confirmed by the World Health Organization, there have been 454 attacks on health care facilities in Ukraine, more than 906 health care facilities are in need of restoration, and more than 123 destroyed (Figure 2) [1-3].



Figure 2. A hospital destroyed by Russian bombs, Izyum, Ukraine (photo by Volodymyr Matsokin)

And now about the science: The Department of Clinical Immunology and Allergology of Lviv National Medical University after Danylo Halytsky has never stopped its work. During the war, scientists of the department have written 4 articles to leading European journals, issued methodological recommendations for students of 5th and 6th years of studying, work continues on a textbook on clinical immunology and allergology [6, 9, 10]. In September, the new academic year began in a hybrid form online (for students of the 5th year) and offline (for students of the 6th year, interns and doctors of the advanced training course). At the same time, in the case of air alarms, classes are either temporarily suspended or continued in the bomb shelters of the department's clinical bases. We also went to Verona and had a Master Class on Perioperative Hypersensitivity (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Participants from Ukraine at the Master Class, Verona, Italy (photo by Svitlana Zubchenko)

I am sincerely thankful to all European colleagues, the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) team for supporting our delegation in Verona. Unfortunately, part of our scientific work on the topic "Investigation of the relationship between the expression level of CD 63 on basophils and clinical and laboratory activity in patients with hypersensitivity to medicinal drugs", which was funded by the government, has been suspended due to the war. But we have great hope that the funding will continue and we will finish this work. A significant event in scientific life was offline participation at the EAACI congress in Prague. The Congress was memorable not only for the many interesting reports, live communication with European colleagues, but also for the presentations based on the results of our research and showing that science was, is and will be in Ukraine. And most importantly that it was Prague where we met our Ukrainian colleagues who ended up in different European countries because of the war. It is difficult to describe my feelings - tears, sadness, anger towards the Russian invaders and the question "How is it possible that the war became real in the 21st century? Why would the Russian "intelligent and educated people" support Putin and this shameful war? How could "doctors" put their signatures approving of the murders of people? [4]". At the final assembly, the Ukrainian delegation came together to thank the EAACI team and President Marek Jutel himself for their strong support for Ukraine, for suspended Russian scientists and doctors from EAACI membership (Figure 4). In the civilized world, the word a scientist or a doctor will be never associated with the word a killer!



Figure 4. The team from Ukraine at the EAACI 2022 Congress, Prague, Czech Republic (photo by Svitlana Zubchenko)

There is a great pride for patriotism and gratitude for devotion to Ukraine to all my colleagues, clinical immunologists and allergists, to the Honored Master of Science and Technology of Ukraine, President of the Ukrainian Society of Clinical Immunology, Allergy and Immunorehabilitation - Professor Ihor Kaidashev, Professor of the Department of Clinical Immunology and Allergology of Lviv National Medical University after Danylo Halytsky - Valentina Chopyak.

Conclusions

Despite such life-threatening environment, the destruction of medical infrastructure and daily reports about the death of our military heroes, losses among the civilian population, including children, pregnant women and the elderly, we have never lost optimism and hope that this war will end with Victory of Ukraine and we will once again be able to provide qualified medical care and do scientific research under proper conditions.

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