

Heal Ukraine Group

October 2022 Newsletter



Ukraine faces new challenges as Russia fired missiles on energy facilities and civilian infrastructure that led to widespread blackouts, forcing the country to brace for rolling power outages as winter begins its arrival in Eastern Ukraine. According to official reports, 30-40% of power facilities in Ukraine are damaged. Despite Ukraine's resilience in implementing nationwide conservation efforts with planned shutdowns of electric services to conserve energy as electricity becomes unstable, this poses issues to already overwhelmed medical facilities that must now prepare for potential blackouts.

The Heal Ukraine Group (www.HealUkraineGroup.org) 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 (www.gmka.org), 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 specialized surgical headlights, surgical instruments, electrosurgical units, and wound treatment materials, such as vacuum-assisted closure devices, to multiple hospitals across Ukraine. In addition, HUG has worked with its supporters in Boston and with Lake Country Medical Aid to Ukraine (www.lakecountryaid.org), a non-profit organization in Georgia, to raise significant funds to support these efforts.

Our work, detailed below could not have been completed without the full and generous support of philanthropy.

We must support Ukraine as it continues to face this growing healthcare crisis.

Individual stories highlighting the 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.

Delivering Wound VACs to Rivne and Boyarka

As the war continues, urgently needed medical equipment is prioritized by our Ukrainian colleagues and HUG focuses on procuring and delivering these specified supplies. Hospitals in Rivne and Boyarka requested Wound VACs, devices for negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT) and these requests have been fulfilled with the delivery of 10 PragmaVAC devices and 100 dressings and 100 drapes. PragmaVacs were procured in collaboration with Dr. Hisham, the founder of the novel low-resource focused and tested NPWT device. He and Dr. Mahmoud (a war surgeon in Syria) completed trial work on chronic and infected wounds in Northern Syria and Southern Turkey, with outcomes that are superior to traditional wet to dry dressings. A physician from Boyarka City Hospital confirmed the benefits of these NPWT devices. Light, easy to use, and manually operated, a quality especially important as electricity blackouts have become more frequent across Ukraine. These manual wound pressure devices promise improved wound care outcomes for patient injuries without the need for electricity.



Ukrainian healthcare team with delivered PragmaVAC devices for enhanced wound treatment



Heart Transplant and Lung Transplant Observership at MGH

On the request from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, a group of Ukrainian physicians and surgeons were invited for an observership at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH). Coordinated by Dr. Serguei Melnitchouk (staff cardiac surgeon at MGH) and supported by the division of cardiac surgery, as well as the department of surgery at MGH, a total of 13 individuals arrived in early October and were welcomed at MGH. This group of observers is comprised of thoracic surgeons, cardiac surgeons, intensivists, perfusionists, anesthesiologists, a cardiologist, a pulmonologist, a pathologist, and a transplant coordinator. Driven by the need to improve heart transplant surgery, as well as initiate lung transplant services in Ukraine, the team of physicians and surgeons are observing transplant procedures, accompanying rounds and clinic visits, and participating in various educational seminars. The team also learns of pre-and postoperative care for patients. Physicians receive deeper insight on transplant cases and related procedures and are able to disseminate this knowledge back in Ukraine because of their productive and enriching experience at MGH.

Over the course of the past few weeks, they were able to observe a good number of transplant operations and acquaint themselves with numerous protocols that are instrumental in the care of these complex cases. Along with the Ukraine Medical Outreach group, HUG was instrumental in helping and coordinating the stay of the physicians with various families in the Boston area.



Ukrainian Transplant team arrival at Boston Logan Airport in early October.



Transplant team with Dr. Serguei Melnitchouk (6th from the left), in front of Mass General Hospital in Boston.



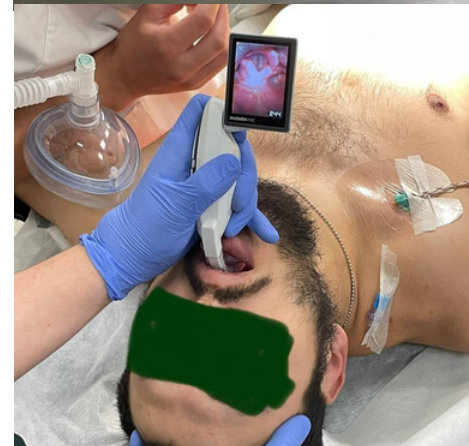
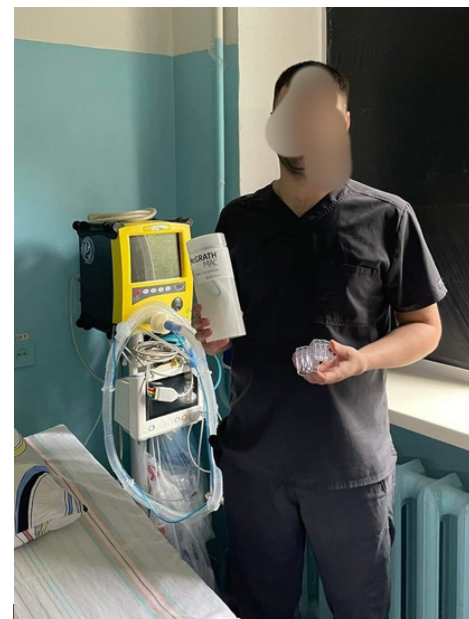
Ukrainian Transplant team social event hosted by Dr. Jackie Hart.



Laryngoscope and Butterfly Ultrasounds to the Frontlines

The presentation of severe traumatic injury is no rarity in Ukraine since Russia's invasion and subsequent scaling up of attacks on civilians and hospitals. The proper care and treatment of traumatic injuries is necessary to optimize trauma outcomes for patients. Any lack of necessary medical devices for trauma assessment and treatment greatly affects the ability of medical facilities to properly care for patients with traumatic injuries and optimize trauma outcomes for affected individuals. Through the multi-partnership collaboration between GMKA, Health Tech Without Borders (HWTB) (www.htwb.org), and HUG members, together with generous donations from Lake Country Aid, state-of-the-art portable Butterfly ultrasound equipment and a portable laryngoscope are in the hands of health care workers on the frontlines in Ukraine. In total, 8 portable ultrasounds were delivered to multiple destinations: five to frontline doctors including the volunteer medical unit "Hospitaliers Medical Battalion", and the remaining three replaced damaged units in a regular hospital in Kharkiv. Laryngoscopes are essential in multiple hospital settings, intensive care units, emergency departments, and recently in a Ukrainian operating room in the war zone- where tracheal intubation would have been impossible without the device. A frontline anesthesiologist who received both devices commented on their use (translated from Ukrainian):

"Today I had a case of severe injury to the facial skull. The video laryngoscope really saved me - I require it for exactly such cases. Tracheal intubation (that is must in this case) is prognostically difficult and would not be possible without a laryngoscope...The condition of the patient is severe, he cannot lie on his back (blood enters his lungs and the patient coughs), constant bleeding from the nose and mouth, he cannot swallow, he cannot open his mouth. And that's where the video laryngoscope rescued us as we intubated the patient with its help. Surgeons operated on the abdomen, then placed a tracheostomy, then operated on the face. And I also used the Butterfly ultrasound to place the central vein (right internal jugular vein)". Basic and essential medical supplies must be delivered to Ukraine to ensure hospitals can provide quality medical care and continue to save lives during this war.



We are grateful for the many contributions donated through the Pavlo Gintov and Lake Country Aid Concert fundraisers. Newsletter designed, written and compiled by Yasmina Berkat in collaboration with Drs. Poznansky, Hart, Melnitchouk and Serbyn.

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