

Heal Ukraine Group

December 2022 Newsletter



In Collaboration
with:



The war rages on, and its consequences escalate. Millions of Ukrainians continue to be displaced as they flee their homes (or what once was) because Russian shelling targets the very foundation of civilian life. Ukrainian citizens who remain face an onslaught of attacks on energy infrastructure. These most recent Russian war crimes, in a litany of many, leaves millions in the literal cold without electricity, heat, and water. While these relentless attacks are intended to break the spirit and fortitude of Ukrainians, our colleagues report that they cannot be broken. HUG's work continues to focus on replenishing, refurbishing, and even revitalizing medical tools and techniques. Already overwhelmed, healthcare facilities now face blackouts and water disruptions; surgeons operate in the dark with nurses and aides holding flashlights to guide incisions during emergency procedures. Many with whom we communicate on the ground relay that this has been the worst month to date, and they brace themselves for a long, unrelenting winter. Now, more than ever, Ukraine needs as much support as possible.

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 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 (www.lakecountryaid.org), a non-profit organization in Georgia led by Dr. Nicholas Chronos and Ralph Olson, that has raised and dispersed significant funds to support these directed and validated medical relief efforts.

Our work, detailed below cannot be completed without the full and generous support of philanthropy.

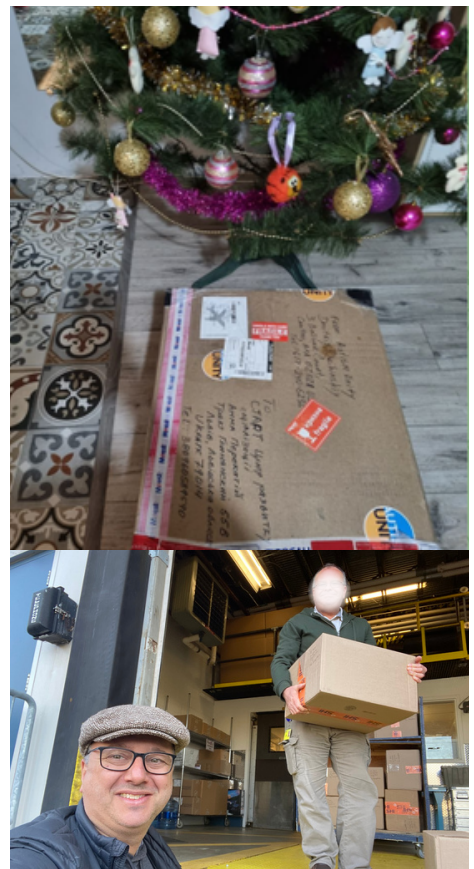
Please join us in support of Ukraine as the country faces a growing healthcare crisis.

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.



Ongoing Effort to Supply Therapeutic Support to Children with Autism in Ukraine

Concerns rise for the mental health of children exposed to the war, as it wages on and into the new year. Therapeutic intervention is vital to diminish the consequences of war-related psychological trauma. With disruptions in educational and clinical support, parents struggle to receive the guidance needed to help their children inflicted by war exposure. This is a mental health crisis for children and parents, especially for the neurodivergent community. In hopes of decreasing the mental health burden of the war on children, Autism Unity (<https://autismunity.org/>) sends needed technology to parents and autism support centers, an effort that coincides with the non-profit's initiative. Fifty more laptops were prepared and shipped to autism support centers in Kyiv and Lviv, Ukraine this month. Another batch of a similar number of laptops had already been delivered earlier in the fall. Families' responses have reflected tremendous thanks: *"We got the box... you can't even imagine the impact of your help and how excited we are! Right on time for the holidays, we are putting the box under the Christmas Tree."* Forty more are en route and 110 more refurbished laptops are being prepared, with updates in software, hardware, and installment of a multi-language support system. As essential trauma-informed services become accessible to families and children with autism, the debilitating effects of war-related trauma can be quantifiably decreased. Parents seeking guidance are afforded research-based strategies to support the mental health needs and development of their children, hopefully avoiding, or at least reducing, further public health implications. A special thanks to Analog Devices for the generous contributions that allow for the securing and sending of technology to Ukraine for this purpose. This initiative would be impossible without the combined efforts of local and international grassroots organizations, including Foundation "Child with a Future" and Parents Association of Children with Autism in Ukraine, and on-the-ground project coordinators and volunteers in Kyiv, Ukraine.



Dmitriy Dribinskiy, founder of Autism Unity, picking up laptops from Analog Devices

Medical Supplies to the Frontlines

As Russia faces a series of defeats and acts in desperation, sending barrages of missiles targeting Ukrainian energy and civilian infrastructure in an apparent effort to leave Ukraine to face sub-zero temperatures without electricity, heating, and water. Despite being weakened by the overwhelming conditions of the war, Ukrainian medical providers display honorable resilience and persistence. As medics on the frontlines continue their fight, HUG continues to support Ukraine with the procurement and delivery of essential medical supplies. Donations with our partners from GMKA and Lake Country Medical Aid for Ukraine continue to provide our Ukrainian colleagues on the frontlines with specifically requested medical devices and supplies urgently needed to provide quality care and life-saving intervention to victims of the war. As a part of the latest procurement and delivery of supplies, magnifying loupes, surgical sutures, and orthopedic bone drills are now in Ukraine, en route to final destinations. Given the nature of modern body armor, the vast majority of wounds sustained by combatants on the frontlines are to the extremities. The lack of essential surgical materials and devices can prolong and/or hinder surgical care, making the management and treatment of extremity fractures quite challenging for medical facilities, directly impacting patient health care outcomes. With bone drills, fracture stabilization is a much easier feat, and with magnifying loupes and surgical materials, surgical procedures may proceed adequately and efficiently. A surgeon from Volodymyrets Hospital expressed the collective gratitude of hospital personnel for the donation and delivery of surgical instruments. Thank you again to Ukrainian physicians of the transplant team, who ended their 3-month observership with MGH this month, for carrying a portion of these supplies to Ukraine.

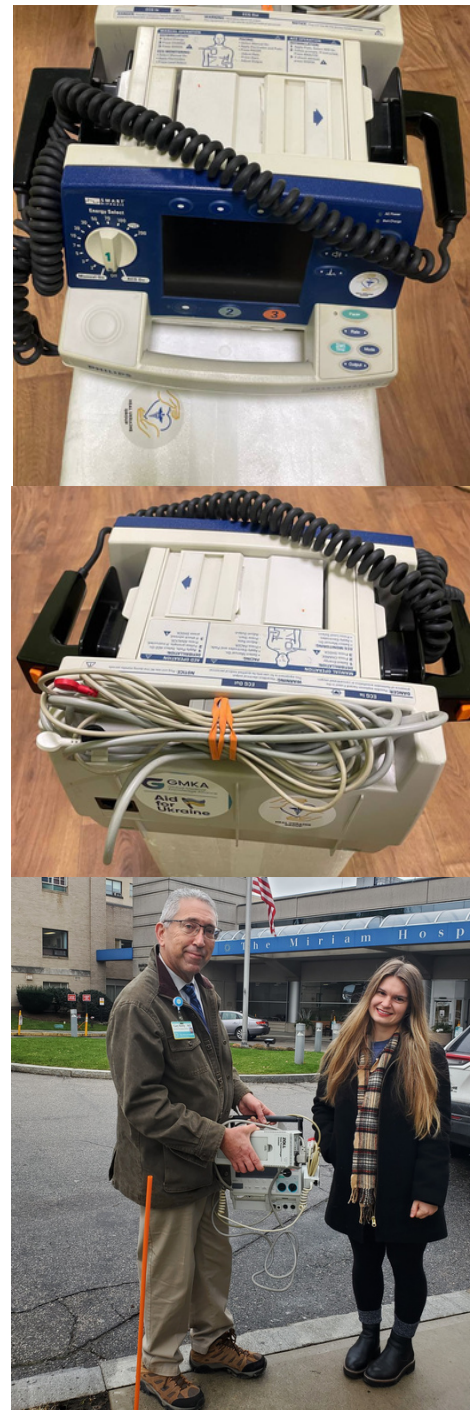


Saying goodbye to a Ukrainian physician (right) of the transplant team at MGH, carrying with him a bag of supplies to Ukraine



Coordinating the Delivery of Defibrillators Needed at a Hospital in Eastern Ukraine

The long-term damage of Russia's unprovoked war, gravely compromising both the healthcare system of Ukraine and the health of the country's citizens, warrants frequent repeating. Per the World Health Organization (WHO), Russians have orchestrated more than 700 attacks on medical facilities in Ukraine with 144 facilities reduced to rubble. Shelling has destroyed dwindling medical supplies in hospitals and makeshift facilities, particularly on the frontlines. Thousands of medical materials are also cut-off from delivery as Russians hold healthcare hostage in a clear breach of humanitarian law. The destruction to the healthcare system in Ukraine is extensive; without intervention, the ramifications will be long lasting. HUG's imperative remains to conserve Ukraine's health care delivery as best as possible in order to sustain vital access and provision of proper medical services for Ukrainians during the acute and enduring phases related to this humanitarian crisis. A recent plea for help communicated urgently and responded to swiftly by our HUG team serves as a resolute example of how we strive to fulfill our mission in the face of the current violence. Related to wanton destruction, a frontline hospital lost their working defibrillator – a critical, lifesaving piece of equipment. Dr. Poznansky and others from the HUG team placed an immediate call and request through professional networks and personal connections – like a medical APB. In less than 24 hours, two defibrillators were secured by a Brown University physician and cousin of a Temple Emanuel congregant. As part of the “where in the world are the defibrillators” scenario, the traveling equipment came from Miriam hospital in Providence to Boston where they split ties: one en route to Krakow via New York City, while the other flew to Vienna and was driven across the border, now already being put to use in Eastern Ukraine. The efficiency of response speaks to the nimble efforts of the expanding HUG networks facilitating the path for two defibrillators to be delivered or en route to Eastern Ukraine within one week of the request. Thank you to Lifespan Health system, an affiliate of Brown University, Dr. Maria Ducharme, President of Miriam Hospital, and Dr. Gary Bubly; Dr. Bubly communicated the need to his colleague, Dr. Ducharme who authorized the donating of the machines. The connections and care allowed for expeditious delivery of life-saving medical equipment: one currently in the hands of Ukrainian medics and the other soon-to-be. Thank you, also, to HUG member, Dr. Nataliia Serbyn's friend, brother, and Ukrainian network who facilitated delivery of defibrillators from Providence to Boston to Vienna over the border and to the requesting frontline clinicians, as well as Jewish Federation of North America (JFNA) volunteer Dan Shpilsky for delivery from NYC to Krakow. The efforts deepen the meaning of the saying “it takes a village;” the positive outcomes related to the collection of steps in this process amount to immeasurably more than the proverbial sum of the parts.



Dr. Gary Bubly at Miriam Hospital with the defibrillators, now in Ukraine.

Art Shows to Support HUG, GMKA, and Autism Unity

This month, we held two successful fundraisers involving works created by Ukrainian artists since the full-scale war escalated more than 10 months ago. The paintings serve as a visual diary, giving voice to the pain, angst, fear, and incredulous anger while also expressing a belief in justice, sense of hope, and resilience of character. While final numbers are not in for either show, an art auction in NYC brought roughly \$15,000 for HUG and GMKA to split with the Ukrainian artists who, like the clinicians we often describe, are working in the dark and struggling for both life and livelihood.



Painting by Ilya Yarovoy



Happy Holidays from the HUG team



*Ukrainian clinician prepares traditional meal
for her American hosts*

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.

Thank you for considering a donation:



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