

CURRENT CHALLENGES AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR IN UKRAINE

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Preserving, protecting and promoting the health of citizens is one of the key state's priorities, which the healthcare system is designed to implement. The full-scale transformation of the system began with the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On State Financial Guarantees of Medical Care for the Population" in 2017. In April 2018, a single national customer for healthcare services, the National Health Service of Ukraine, was established. At the same time, the process of autonomization of healthcare institutions began with a change in the principles of their management by transforming municipal budgetary institutions into municipal non-profit enterprises.

The reform of specialized medical care began on April 1, 2020: most of the public healthcare expenditures were centralized and merged into the Medical Guarantee Program, which is a package of services that defines medical services and medicines to be paid for by the National Health Service of Ukraine. Healthcare institutions have switched from financing itemized estimates to paying for the result (i.e., actually treated cases or the prescribed population). Money began to "follow the patient" rather than the infrastructure of healthcare facilities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the public health and emergency response systems, and in some cases, the lack of national, regional, and local emergency preparedness plans and procedures. A Center for Public Health was established at the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, marking the beginning of the transformation of the public health system in the country. Over the past four years, Ukraine has implemented a number of large-scale measures to digitalize the healthcare sector.

The key indicators of the healthcare system in Ukraine before the war are [1]:

- life expectancy (as of 2020) was 76 years for women and 66 for men, which is one of the lowest in Europe;
- healthcare spending in Ukraine has been growing every year, but has not come close to global indicators as a share of GDP. Thus, total expenditures on the medical guarantee program in 2021 amounted to 2.4% of GDP;

- Ukraine had overcapacity in the hospital sector with almost twice as many hospitals as countries in the WHO European Region (42 hospitals per 1 million people);
- the main causes of premature death in Ukraine are non-communicable diseases, accounting for six out of ten leading causes of death, nine out of ten leading causes of premature death, and 84% of all annual deaths.

The healthcare sector is one of the most affected by the war. As of June 21, 2022, 118 healthcare facilities were completely destroyed, and 633 healthcare facilities were partially destroyed (from 2% to 90% damage). The estimated cost of damages is preliminary estimated at almost UAH 35 billion [1].

The healthcare system is also under particular strain due to population migration (about 7 million Ukrainians have become internally displaced) and the loss and displacement of healthcare workers. During the war, 12 medical workers were killed and 47 were injured. 2372 employees of emergency medical centers are in the occupied territories. 2273 healthcare workers went abroad (0.5% of the total number of healthcare workers in the country), 1714 doctors and 1095 nurses changed their place of work because of the war. The lack of human and organizational capacity of the health care system to provide rehabilitation and mental health services exacerbates the situation with meeting the needs of citizens for quality and affordable services.

The main goal of the healthcare sector recovery is to develop a healthcare system with new quality and accessibility of services to meet the needs of citizens. This goal can be achieved through the implementation of the following measures:

- ensuring the financial stability of the healthcare system by introducing flexible financing methods, expanding medical guarantee programs, and developing a voluntary health insurance market;
- restoration and transformation of the health care network by expanding primary health care services, introducing multi-year contracts between the National Health Service of Ukraine and health care institutions;
- strengthening of medical services to meet the special needs of people caused by the war, which includes the development of rehabilitation care, mental health services, trauma, orthopedic and intensive care services [2];
- strengthening and enhancing the human resources of the healthcare system by integrating healthcare education and research into the modern international context, creating conditions for ensuring the professional well-being of healthcare workers;
- development of e-health and strengthening of cybersecurity by forming a unified medical information space, ensuring infrastructure and technical conditions for the provision of quality medical services, creating convenient

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- and transparent mechanisms for users to access complete data on their health and manage this information;
- restoring the pharmaceutical sector, improving access and proper use of medicines.

References

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