

HIMUNC VII BACKGROUND GUIDE

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World Health Organization:

Ukraine



Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the seventh iteration of HIMUNC! We are thrilled to have you participate in this year's conference and engage in meaningful discussions. As your chairs, we are committed to facilitating a committee session that explores the current relevance of healthcare challenges in Ukraine and the vital role of the World Health Organization (WHO). In today's society, the global community faces a myriad of health-related challenges, and the situation in Ukraine serves as a perfect example. The relevance of these efforts is especially pronounced in the context of ongoing conflicts, the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the approaching winter season.

The focus on mental health awareness, stigma reduction, and the rebuilding of the mental health system aligns with the growing recognition of mental health as a global priority. Your contributions to this aspect of the committee session will contribute to the ongoing global dialogue surrounding mental health and well-being. In essence, this committee session offers a unique opportunity to examine and address healthcare challenges that resonate on a global scale. Your insights and proposals will not only contribute to the resolution of issues specific to Ukraine but will also provide valuable perspectives for enhancing global health resilience. Together, let's work towards solutions that not only address the immediate challenges faced by Ukraine but also contribute to the broader discourse on strengthening healthcare systems worldwide. If you have any questions, thoughts, or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the chairs or our Undersecretary-General of Specialized Agencies, Saravana Balaji Mohan Balaji. We look forward to an insightful and impactful committee session!

Regards,

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Topic 1: Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure and Access in Ukraine

Introduction

The people of Ukraine, a nation rich in its cultural legacy, have recently been forced to endure many difficulties, especially those related to valuable healthcare accessibility. Priorities that cannot be overlooked include expanding access to healthcare services and establishing a strong healthcare infrastructure. In order to address the medical demands of the Ukrainian people, a strong healthcare system must be built because of the country's persistent economic uncertainties. Given these obstacles, the development of the region's social and economic stability as well as the general well-being of the population rely on a thorough strategy to keep the healthcare system as efficient and strong.

Ukraine, like many nations, faces considerable challenges in providing comprehensive and equitable healthcare services to its population. This necessitates a focused approach towards bolstering its healthcare infrastructure and ensuring widespread accessibility. A big toll has been taken on the infrastructure in the area mainly due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the Russo-Ukrainian War.¹

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light more shortcomings within the Ukrainian healthcare system. The significance of having an adaptable and well-structured healthcare system cannot be overstated, particularly in light of the current global health issues. Improving the physical spaces of clinics and hospitals is just one aspect of supporting the Ukrainian healthcare system; other measures include

¹ "UKRAINE | Summary." Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 16 Jan. 2021, www.publichealth.columbia.edu/research/others/comparative-health-policy-library/ukraine-summary. Accessed 20 Nov. 2023.

hiring experts, investing in medical technology, and passing relevant health laws. By addressing these issues, we can strengthen the country's healthcare system and increase its ability to respond to medical emergencies.²

Regional differences and differences in service quality define access to healthcare in Ukraine. While rural areas sometimes struggle with a lack of medical experts and a weak healthcare infrastructure, urban centers typically have better-equipped hospitals and access to specialized treatment. Inadequate funding for the healthcare system has been exacerbated by political unrest and economic hardships, which have affected access to basic treatments and impeded the adoption of significant changes.

Furthermore, the fighting in eastern Ukraine has put additional strain on the hospital

² World. "New WHO Assessment Reveals Resilience of Ukraine's Primary Health-Care System amid the War." Who.int, World Health Organization: WHO, 12 Oct. 2023, www.who.int/europe/news/item/12-10-2023-new-who-assessment-reveals-resilience-of-ukraine-s-primary-health-care-system-amid-the-war#:~:text=Ukraine's%20primary%20health%2Dcare%20system%20had%20already%20been%20under%20stress,war%20since%2024%20February%202022. Accessed 20 Nov. 2023.

system due to population relocation and interruptions in medical supply chains that have an impact on the entire health infrastructure.

Initiatives to address these problems and improve access to healthcare are underway in Ukraine. Reforms are being implemented to enhance primary care, increase preventative services, and encourage a more patient-centered approach. International alliances and financial support are also helping to develop a more resilient and inclusive healthcare system. While there has been progress, more needs to be done to ensure that all Ukrainians have equitable access to high-quality healthcare services.

History

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Ukraine encountered difficulties in restructuring its healthcare system. This transition period resulted in

disparities in healthcare access, notably between urban and rural areas.

Current status

As of the present, Ukraine's healthcare system confronts formidable challenges that significantly impact the well-being of its populace. Persistent underfunding and resource scarcity hinder the system's ability to invest in modern medical technologies, essential infrastructure upgrades, and the recruitment and retention of qualified healthcare professionals. The shortage of medical personnel, particularly acute in rural areas, continues to impede the delivery of essential services. Outdated healthcare infrastructure poses a substantial obstacle to providing efficient and effective medical care, with the necessity for significant upgrades underscored by the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional disparities persist, with urban centers benefiting from better-equipped facilities and specialized

treatments, while rural regions grapple with inadequate infrastructure and a dearth of healthcare experts. Ongoing conflicts, notably the Russo-Ukrainian War, exacerbate these challenges, causing population displacement and interruptions in the healthcare supply chain. Despite these adversities, reform initiatives focusing on primary care strengthening, increased preventive services, and a patient-centered approach are underway. International alliances and financial support play a crucial role in bolstering resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability. Nevertheless, the healthcare system requires continued attention to address systemic issues, such as underfunding and workforce shortages, ensuring equitable access to high-quality healthcare services for all Ukrainians, particularly in times of crisis.³

³ Olivier Uwishema, et al. "Russia-Ukraine Conflict and COVID-19: A Double Burden for Ukraine's Healthcare System and a Concern for Global Citizens." *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, vol. 98, no. 1162, Oxford University Press, June 2022, pp. 569–71, <https://doi.org/10.1136/postgradmedj-2022-141895>. Accessed 20 Nov. 2023.

Future

The future of healthcare infrastructure and access in Ukraine hinges on the commitment of both domestic and international stakeholders to address existing challenges and foster sustainable growth. It is imperative for Ukraine to continue implementing healthcare reforms, ensuring transparency and accountability in resource allocation. Strengthening primary healthcare services, investing in modern medical equipment and facilities, and prioritizing preventive healthcare measures are essential steps toward improving healthcare infrastructure. Furthermore, efforts should be directed toward resolving healthcare disparities in conflict-affected areas and enhancing healthcare resilience to future crises, such as pandemics. Delegates are encouraged to explore innovative financing mechanisms, international partnerships, and

policy solutions to support Ukraine's healthcare sector in the coming years.

Efforts are increasingly directed towards reform and improvement in Ukraine's healthcare system. The focus is on implementing reforms that enhance infrastructure, elevate healthcare service quality, and ensure accessibility for all citizens.⁴

Additionally, Ukraine has made large financial investments in the building and renovation of healthcare facilities, resulting in the creation of cutting-edge hospitals and clinics equipped with the most recent technologies. Shorter wait times for medical procedures and better overall service quality are the main advantages of the expanded capacity and upgraded infrastructure. Because of the government's dedication to health, a skilled healthcare workforce has been drawn to guaranteeing that the nation

⁴ for, Centre. "Continuity of Essential Health Services in Ukraine during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Key Findings from Two Surveys Conducted in April and November 2021." Who.int, World Health Organization, 27 Sept. 2023, www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2023-7242-47008-68690. Accessed 20 Nov. 2023.

will have a sufficient number of professionals to address the expanding requirements of its citizens.

In addition to the physical facility building, a number of public health programs centered on health education and preventative care have been implemented, which is encouraging for Ukraine's healthcare system going forward. These initiatives have placed a strong emphasis on assisting vaccination efforts, educating the public about lifestyle options, and addressing the root causes of prevalent health issues. As a result, the incidence of diseases that may be prevented has dramatically dropped, enhancing the general health and well-being of Ukrainians. This innovative approach to healthcare has not only made the country more resilient to health setbacks but also made Ukraine a global leader in effective and conveniently accessible healthcare systems.

Questions to Consider

1. What are the main barriers to healthcare access in Ukraine, and how can they be addressed?
2. How can Ukraine ensure equitable healthcare access across urban and rural regions?
3. What role can international organizations, like the WHO, play in supporting Ukraine's healthcare development?
4. How can Ukraine prepare its healthcare system for future health emergencies and pandemics?
5. What innovations and technologies can be employed to enhance healthcare in Ukraine?

Topic 2: Addressing Public Health Challenges and Crisis Preparedness in Ukraine

Introduction

Two former republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Ukraine and Russia, are undergoing a significant conflict. Global tension invites many serious issues, especially public healthcare availability. While one of the central focuses of the government is to help in providing and delivering healthcare, recently, the situation has notably worsened.

Despite WHO's and other non-governmental organizations' best efforts, some regions of Ukraine have suffered a drop in the quality of health care and service delivery as a result of the war. Many areas no longer receive clean, running water and electricity. Hospitals situated in Eastern Ukraine are only able to provide minimal aid, causing patients to travel longer distances in order to seek further assistance.

Background

Before the war, Ukraine had a high prevalence of depression, alcohol use

disorder, and suicide, which were the second leading cause of disability burden in the country. According to a WHO report, up to 30% of the population had some form of mental disorder, but only 10% received adequate treatment.⁵ Some of the major barriers to mental health care in Ukraine were the lack of trust in the psychiatric system, the stigma and discrimination against people with mental disorders, and the low awareness and understanding of mental health among the general public and health professionals.⁶ Moreover, the mental health system was largely based on institutionalization and medication, with little emphasis on psychosocial support and community-based services.⁷

The war with Russia exacerbated the mental health problems in Ukraine, as

⁵ Kuntz, Leah. 2022. "Before the Toils of War: Mental Health in Ukraine." *Psychiatric Times*, March 2, 2022. <https://www.psychiatrytimes.com/view/before-the-toils-of-war-mental-health-in-ukraine>.

⁶ Colborne, Michael. 2016. "In Ukraine, Mistrust of Doctors Remains High." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 188 (9): E179. <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.109-5247>.

⁷ "What to Learn from Ukraine's Response to a Mental Health." 2023. World Economic Forum. March 7, 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/10/ukraine-mental-health-crisis-world-mental-health-day/>.

millions of people were exposed to trauma, violence, displacement, and loss. 18% of the population in the conflict-affected areas reported symptoms of anxiety, 22% of depression, and 30% of severe psychological distress.⁸ The most vulnerable groups were the internally displaced persons, the elderly, the children, and the health workers. The war also disrupted the already fragile mental health system, as many facilities were damaged or destroyed, and many staff were killed or injured. The access to mental health care became even more limited and difficult, especially for those living near the frontlines or in the non-government-controlled areas.

Solutions to the Solutions

Despite facing challenges such as damaged infrastructure, limited resources, and security risks, various healthcare initiatives have been implemented by local

⁸ Seleznova, Violetta, Ирина Пінчук, Inna Feldman, B. Вирченко, Bo Wang, and Norbert Skokauskas. 2023. "The Battle for Mental Well-Being in Ukraine: Mental Health Crisis and Economic Aspects of Mental Health Services in Wartime." *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 17 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-023-00598-3>.

and international actors to address both urgent and long-term health needs. These initiatives encompass diverse modalities of service provision, including telemedicine, mobile medical teams, and community-based health workers.⁹ Efforts are directed towards identifying and assisting vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, women, children, and individuals with chronic conditions or disabilities, who encounter barriers to accessing and affording healthcare.¹⁰ Additionally, initiatives focus on protecting and strengthening the health workforce through

⁹ World Health Organization: WHO. 2022. "Accessing Health Care in Ukraine after 8 Months of War: The Health System Remains Resilient, but Key Health Services and Medicine Are Increasingly Unaffordable." *Accessing Health Care in Ukraine After 8 Months of War: The Health System Remains Resilient, but Key Health Services and Medicine Are Increasingly Unaffordable*, October 24, 2022. <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/24-10-2022-accessing-health-care-in-ukraine-after-8-months-of-war--the-health-system-remains-resilient--but-key-health-services-and-medicine-are-increasingly-unaffordable>.

¹⁰ The Health Cluster in Ukraine – 1 Year After the War. 2023. "The Health Cluster in Ukraine – 1 Year after the War," April 26, 2023. <https://healthcluster.who.int/newsroom/news/item/26-04-23-the-health-cluster-in-ukraine-1-year-after-the-war>.

training, psychosocial support, and the provision of essential resources.¹¹

Nevertheless, these initiatives encounter challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. Issues include a lack of coordination and accountability among multiple actors in the health sector, leading to duplication, gaps, and inefficiencies.¹² Inadequate funding and resources pose significant hurdles in meeting the growing and complex health needs of the population, especially in the context of the recently passed COVID-19 pandemic and the winter season.¹³ Persistent insecurity and violence further jeopardize the lives and safety of health workers and

patients, violating the principles of medical neutrality and humanitarian law.

Questions to Consider

1. How can the the delivery of humanitarian aid, including medical supplies and personnel, to conflict-affected regions in Ukraine, be ensured, considering the challenges posed by damaged infrastructure and security risks?
2. In what ways can the UN promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues in Ukraine, with a focus on combating stigma and discrimination against individuals with mental disorders?
3. What measures can be taken to strengthen and rebuild the mental health system in Ukraine, taking into account the disruption caused by the conflict, including damaged facilities and loss of staff?

¹¹ World Bank Group. 2023. "Despite the War, Ukraine Continues Providing Necessary Health Services to Patients." World Bank. February 14, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/02/14/despite-the-war-ukraine-continues-providing-necessary-health-services-to-patients>.

¹² Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. 2022. "The Vulnerability of Health Care in Conflict: Ukraine and Beyond," April 15, 2022. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/2022/the-vulnerability-of-health-care-in-conflict-ukraine-and-beyond>.

¹³ House, White. 2022. "FACT SHEET: The Biden Administration Announces New Humanitarian, Development, and Democracy Assistance to Ukraine and the Surrounding Region." The White House. March 24, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/24/fact-sheet-the-biden-administration-announces-new-humanitarian-development-and-democracy-assistance-to-ukraine-and-the-surrounding-region/>.

4. What strategies can be implemented to secure adequate funding and resources for healthcare initiatives in Ukraine, considering the complex health needs of the population and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. What role can telemedicine, mobile medical teams, and community-based health workers play in improving healthcare delivery in regions where traditional healthcare infrastructure has been severely disrupted by the conflict?

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