

MEDICAL SCIENCES

THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: MAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO MODERNISE

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The impact of the invasion of Ukraine on medical education

Medical education in Ukraine has been significantly disrupted since February 2022, due to the invasion of Russian forces. However, despite the conditions, educational institutions continue to work. At time of writing (March 2023), 3145 educational institutions have been damaged by bombings and shelling in Ukraine of which 415 have been completely destroyed, in addition to kindergartens, orphanages, and schools. (1) Additionally, 22 vocational educational institutions have been destroyed and 124 were damaged. The regions where educational institutions were mostly damaged are Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipro and Mykolaiv [2].

Ukrainian health care has faced enormous change. A great number of medical buildings and facilities have also been destroyed. Many institutions have been forced to move their teaching online, and most medical schools have been unable to provide clinical teaching for students at times, if not altogether, since the invasion. The Ukrainian healthcare system is currently searching for the ways out of the crisis situation and using the opportunity to build an improved model of delivery where possible. International cooperation is a key element of the integration of medical education. It is this interaction of universities that opens the way to the creation of a single educational space, and forming unity of approaches to licensing and accreditation. While the situation in Ukraine remains highly challenging, there are opportunities created through new international relationships which can be utilised to improve the provision of education within Ukraine in the future.

UK support to develop medical education in Ukraine

Medical education in Great Britain, particularly in Scotland, is the subject of considerable academic and organisational effort. Developments in the training of future doctors are at the forefront of international standards [3], emphasizing the

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vital role that doctors play in society, and despite changed relationship with the European Union due to Brexit, the prestige of British universities among the youth of both Western and Eastern Europe remains high. For Ukraine, the experience of Great Britain is extremely relevant, where the training of future doctors is carried out in accordance with world standards and doctors are highly respected and trusted within society [4]. Higher education institutions in Great Britain also score very highly among world rankings [5; 6].

In April 2022, UK medical schools were offered the opportunity to twin with medical schools in Ukraine for an initial five-year period, to offer whatever support was needed to maintain medical education during the war [7]. The University of Dundee was twinned with Dnipro State Medical School.

The collaboration between DSMU and Dundee university has been initiated the aim of improving the Ukrainian system of education through:

- Creating and developing professional education with new thinking, ideas, adaptive curriculum, modern materials, and interactive digital education;
- Collaborative working between faculty at Dundee University and those at DSMU, to support curriculum redesign, ongoing professional development, and innovative digital technologies into the educational process;
- Expansion of international partnership programmes in the field of science and medicine through research collaboration and shared expertise;
- Supporting international academic mobility, which also supports requirements of accreditation for DSMU.

One key outcome of this is that students of DSMU can undertake a 6-week internship in Dundee medical school, using elective placements offered by NHS Tayside. The first students have had placements in the departments of surgery and emergency care and have returned home with new practical skills. This increased clinical exposure helps the students with their clinical understanding, but also allows them the opportunity to assist Ukrainian doctors in the city of Dnipro on their return.

At the same time the Universities have begun a series of teaching exchange visits, to allow development of advanced pedagogical experiences. The educational and methodological goal of these exchanges is to identify, characterize and adopt the theoretical-methodological, structural-content, organizational and methodological features of the professional training of future doctors in the higher medical educational institutions of Great Britain. This will allow the creative implementation of innovative ideas from the British experience to develop the medical education system of the State Medical University and Ukraine in general.

Next steps

Ukraine's ambition is to create courses for European integration, by improving the quality of professional training in accordance with world

standards. The aim is to strengthen the competitiveness of domestic higher medical education, and increase appeal internationally. These improvements and adaptations to society in the 21st century will ensure that Ukrainian students and teachers can be competitive in the international labour market, supporting the Ukrainian economy in its recovery.

These initial stages will be followed by further development of close relations and the search for common scientific interests for future cooperation and development of scientific projects, participation in international exchange programs within the framework of signing an agreement on cooperation and the organization of mutual relations. It is intended that student internships, and staff exchange visits continue.

After the end of war in Ukraine, faculty from University of Dundee plan to visit DSMU to deepen the relationship which in developing, and to support the implementation of changes to curriculum and assessment in the future. This active international cooperation will contribute to raising the status and strengthening the authority of DSMU in the system of higher medical education, and will activate its further integration into the world educational and scientific community.

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