

Call to Action

Rebuilding lives

Investing in Ukraine's patient care, healthcare, and health-related research for post-war recovery

The ongoing war in Ukraine presents immense challenges for patient care, healthcare, and health-related research. These are concerns of an immediate need requiring significant support, investment, and collaboration now and following the war. The impact on research capabilities, medical facilities, education, and patient services has been enormous: 1400 healthcare facilities have been damaged (as of June 2023). Pre-war and right up until today, clinical research has been of critical importance to Ukraine's healthcare infrastructure, addressing patients' needs, supporting science and education, and a key enterprise in the country's economy. On February 24, 2022, Ukraine had 794 clinical trials approved of which 584 having been active CTs. In the face of ongoing conflict, the clinical research infrastructure has proven itself enormously resilient and an ongoing key contributor to healthcare even while much of the healthcare infrastructure has been severely compromised, leading to a critical shortage of medical resources, limited access to innovative treatments, and a significant gap in clinical research opportunities. Although new recruitment was initially paused, research sites in Ukraine, Poland, and neighbouring countries have identified safe and effective solutions for transport and remote care to continue clinical research activity in protracted conflict. As of June 2023, 36 new trials have been initiated in Ukraine. Investing in Ukraine's present and future clinical research infrastructure is also an investment in patient care and healthcare.

We urgently call upon stakeholders throughout the European and international communities, national policymakers, health-related funding institutions, and international organizations to unite and take decisive action to support investment and reconstruction in Ukraine's clinical research enterprise to address the needs of patients, healthcare, and health-related research as Ukraine's health and research infrastructure confronts the devastating effects of this war.

The following support structures are needed:

1. **Restoring Accessible and Quality Patient Care:** In many places, the war has seriously disrupted or destroyed healthcare services, leaving communities without access to essential care. The reconstruction of damaged healthcare facilities must be prioritized to ensure their accessibility to all. Investing in the clinical research enterprise as well as in medical equipment, essential supplies, hospital reconstruction, and skilled healthcare professionals is crucial for providing immediate and long-term care to the affected communities.
2. **Supporting Health-related Research:** Investment in Ukraine's clinical research enterprise is vital for addressing the health needs of the Ukrainian population. It is equally important to raise awareness and address the enormous impact this war has and will continue to have on chronic diseases, especially cancer. There will be a need to identify, document, and evaluate the long-term effects of the war on public health, identify preventative measures, invest in developing innovative treatments, and raise awareness on the outcomes. In this sense, there is a stringent need to allocate research funding and resources to research institutions, foster collaboration among scientists, strengthen the clinical trials enterprise, and provide funding for studies focusing on disaster response, mental health, cancer, infectious diseases, and community resilience.

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3. **Strengthening Health Systems Capacity and Infrastructure:** The war has created weaknesses and vulnerabilities throughout the healthcare infrastructure. At the international level, there is a need to strengthen efforts to begin immediately to plan and invest in rebuilding and reinforcing medical facilities that have been destroyed or seriously damaged. By strengthening the healthcare infrastructure, we can better serve devastated communities and populations.
4. **Empowering the Clinical Research and Healthcare Workforce:** The war has placed an enormous strain on healthcare professionals, including those working in clinical research, who tirelessly serve on the frontlines and throughout the country. Efforts must be made to invest in training programs, mental health support, and incentives to attract, rebuild, and retain skilled clinical researchers and healthcare workers. By prioritizing the well-being and professional development of the clinical researchers and healthcare workforce, Ukraine can rebuild to realize sustainable and high-quality clinical research and patient care.
5. **Mobilizing International Support and Solidarity:** We call upon EU Institutions, international organizations, governments, industry, and philanthropic entities to join hands in supporting Ukraine's response and recovery efforts. Financial assistance, technical expertise, and knowledge exchange are crucial for preserving and rebuilding Ukraine's resilient patient care, healthcare, and research systems. Together, we can leverage global partnerships to expedite the needed recovery and strengthen Ukraine's clinical research and healthcare services.

By so doing, we can restore hope for Ukraine, save lives, and build a resilient clinical research infrastructure that serves its healthcare system and the public health needs of the nation's future.

Together, we have the power to work hand-in-hand with the dedicated and brave clinical research professionals in Ukraine who have remained on the frontlines for their patients and for their country's vital enterprise. By supporting this cause, you are not only supporting the Ukraine's own immediate needs in science and healthcare as it is directly impacted by this war, but also contributing to global scientific knowledge and advancements in healthcare.

We, therefore, call on the EU Institutions to unite forces with international stakeholders and commit to rebuild a stronger Ukraine and ensure that this nation receives the support in healthcare now so desperately needed. The time to act is now.