



UA to SE: Lessons from Ukraine's Healthcare System Resilience

The Ukrainian healthcare system often finds itself at the mercy of critics, not least from Ukrainians themselves. It is said to be clumsy and outdated, bloated in terms of facilities and hospital beds, inconsistent in its use of best practices, relying heavily on out-of-pocket spending by patients and, last but not least, it is not free of corrupt practices. The above may be true to some degree. Still, the Ukrainian healthcare framework has made huge advances in the years post-independence, driven by enthusiastic and highly skilled medical personnel and a thriving private sector which, through sharing part of its workforce with the state-funded system, allows it to grow.

All of that – the good and the bad – was put to the test by Russia's full-scale invasion. After all, if a bomb destroys a hospital, it hardly matters whether green practices had been fully implemented prior to that. Other forces come into play, one of which is Ukraine's greatest strength: its people. This shows particularly in the healthcare sector, which, despite the destruction of hundreds of healthcare facilities, the deaths and migration of medical professionals, and massive losses among military personnel and civilians, continues to reform and provide medical care from primary services to bone marrow transplants.

Based on the conclusions from the report of our colleagues' at the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) in 2023, [titled](#) "Building Resilience for the Future: Lessons from Ukraine," we have identified seven key lessons from Ukraine, with a focus on healthcare.

1. Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is a key capability in uniting people and explaining their roles both during reforms and at war. Ukraine demonstrates daily the value of an "all-society" approach to resilience. This is made possible by constant communication, primarily within society itself: between civil society, journalists and the public, via interaction in professional communities, including among healthcare professionals, through open resources and private groups in social media. This is supplemented with constant communication between the state and its citizens, which takes place through official, trusted channels of state institutions, both in traditional media and in social media.

2. Achieving Preparedness for Defense

Releasing the power of individuals and civil society is vital. The movement of millions of people within Ukraine, evacuation of soldiers and civilians from the battlefield, surgeries and deliveries during blackouts and shelling - all of this puts an incredible strain on medical professionals during the war. Morale, national leadership, initiative, imagination, and discipline – these intangible factors, difficult to quantify and subject to sudden changes – are decisive on Ukraine's battlefields. The role of medical leadership and the spirit of doctors and nurses in Ukraine today is invaluable. So is the mobilization of leaders responsible for providing medical care, equipping safe shelters, and ensuring that medical facilities have the energy they need to operate smoothly.

3. Investment in Cybersecurity

From individual awareness to international cooperation, investment in cybersecurity is crucial. [EHealth](#), Ukraine's electronic healthcare system, is currently one of the most comprehensive and modern databases on healthcare reform implementation, taking into account the challenges of war. The system is transparent and up-to-date in displaying the volume of medical services provided and the reports on financing by the state under the Medical Guarantee Program, as well as accounting for many other electronic medical records. Russia is constantly trying to discredit public confidence in the healthcare reform through information warfare, making patient data protection one of the most important challenges for the healthcare system today.

4. Engaging the Private Sector

In the wake of the full-scale invasion, flexible and independent private healthcare enterprises began actively implementing telemedicine services for populations in frontline regions. The



development of private healthcare institutions and partnerships with charitable organizations and international agents significantly reduces the burden on the public healthcare system, helping to maintain access to medical care for Ukrainian patients.

5. Emergency Services

The role of emergency rescue services is a valuable resource with great symbolic significance. The dedication of Ukrainian doctors, who remain in frontline cities to support those who have stayed behind and who risk their lives as military medics, cannot be overstated. Where a doctor is present, there is always room for hope.

6. Culture Promotes Resilience and Unity

Protecting cultural heritage and social infrastructure is essential to resilience. This lesson prompts the world to reflect: How much do we value our history and culture, which has shaped us as a nation? Are we ready to defend these values against aggression in various spheres of society, from culture to healthcare?

7. Change for the Better is Always Timely

The healthcare reform in Ukraine began in 2017, and even war could not stop this departure from the post-Soviet system. Critical shifts toward patient-centered care, transparency, and efficient resource management in healthcare continue amidst widespread destruction and loss. This flexibility allows for rapid responses to entirely new challenges and needs, contributing globally to the post-war health recovery of Ukrainians.

The political will of the government and of the medical and patient community to change for the better made the reform of the Ukrainian healthcare system possible. It has been charged with potential that even the war cannot stop. To us all, the experience of Ukraine delivers a tremendous lesson: freedom, democracy, and security can no longer be taken for granted. They are worth fighting for—whether on the front lines or in operating rooms.