

GRM



**GLOBAL
RESPONSE
MEDICINE**

MAY 2024

BRIDGING BORDERS OF CARE

2-Week Immersion at
Massachusetts General Hospital
& Boston Medical Center



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

SUMMARY

In 2023, Global Response Medicine (GRM) partnered with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the EU Foreign Policy Initiative to launch a 12-month fellowship in emergency medicine, trauma surgery, and burn care for Ukrainian physicians providing acute care during the war. Supported by US clinicians who provided bedside training in Ukraine, the program culminated in a two-week immersion at leading US hospitals.

In May 2024, eight doctors from Kharkiv—a region that has seen some of the heaviest fighting during the war—attended the fellowship. These clinicians have persevered through occupation, liberation, and renewed threats, remaining dedicated to caring for the wounded under extraordinary circumstances.



For two weeks, they trained at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Boston Medical Center (BMC) under the mentorship of Dr. Jarone Lee (MGH) and Dr. Joe Leanza (BMC). The physicians immersed themselves in daily hospital activities, focusing on the Emergency Department (ED) and the intensive care unit (ICU). They gained insights into processes, procedures, and best practices in patient care, case management, and medical procedures. Each day concluded with debriefs involving hospital staff, Course Director Dr. Stephen Donnelly, and Boston Team Lead Kelsey Gonzalez.

The fellowship aimed to improve patient survival and lay the groundwork for developing emergency medicine and trauma surgery specialties in Ukraine. The immersive experience exposed the Ukrainian doctors to a different healthcare system and provided hands-on training, facilitating the exchange and adaptation of best practices. This will empower them to enhance the efficacy and effectiveness of emergency care in their home facilities, ultimately leading to better patient outcomes and improved treatment capacity during the ongoing war.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Following a year-long fellowship in emergency medicine in Kharkiv Oblast, involving extensive local training and discussions with hospital leadership, eight key stakeholders were chosen to participate in a two-week observation fellowship in emergency medicine and intensive care at MGH and BMC in May 2024. The participants included the medical director and an anesthesiologist from Izyum City Hospital, alongside seven anesthesiologists from Kharkiv Regional Hospital, three of whom are based in the ED.

The primary objective of the training program was to observe and assimilate best practices in acute and critical care protocols within urban settings. The fellows aimed to adapt these learnings to enhance practices within their respective hospital departments.

“ American healthcare has advantages and disadvantages, but it still functions as a system. Ukrainian healthcare is totally sporadic; there’s no systemic approach at all, no proper interaction, and communication between EMS, primary, and advanced levels of care. Ukraine needs a reorganization of healthcare to make it work as a system.
Vlad, Anesthesiology Resident, Cardiac ICU ”



The fellowship at MGH and BMC was an intensive two-week immersion that mirrored US residency programs, focusing on emergency medicine and critical care. The program emphasized a step-by-step approach, teamwork, and evidence-based practices, which impressed the fellows, who noted the benefits of efficient protocols and collaboration. Fellows also highlighted the importance of system reforms in Ukraine, including increasing staff motivation, enhancing training opportunities, and integrating advanced technologies like EPIC systems and ultrasound in daily practice.

In the two-week period, the fellows observed the following activities and hospital practices, as organized by department:

ED

- Patient triage and assessment
- Trauma activation protocols
- Time management in emergencies
- Team-based trauma care
- Use of electronic systems for accountability

ICU

- Multidisciplinary rounds
- Evidence-based treatment protocols
- Advanced ultrasound use
- Infection control practices
- Family involvement in care decisions



HEALING & INNOVATION

Alongside their clinical shifts at MGH and BMC, the fellows explored Boston's medical and cultural offerings. They toured Home Base, an MGH program dedicated to healing the invisible wounds of war for Veterans, Service Members, and their families. This was followed by an insightful conversation with leadership, including Dr. Ron Hirschberg, about wartime experiences and providing care to military personnel.

At Brigham and Women's STRATUS Center, the fellows engaged in advanced medical simulations, including a unique space medicine simulator developed with NASA. They practiced basic ED trauma skills, point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS), and simulated medical emergencies at BMC's Solomont Simulation Center. Additionally, they received advanced POCUS training from Dr. Andrew Liteplo, a first-generation Ukrainian and the director of the MGH Center for Ultrasound Research and Education.

One fellow, a classically trained pianist and the medical director of a hospital bombed in March 2022, was invited by Boston Mayor Michelle Wu to City Hall. He played her piano, bonding over their shared passion for music. He also performed at an event hosted by the Berklee Music and Health Institute and Home Base Program at Boston Conservatory at Berklee, discussing music's role in healing trauma.



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Witnessing him play the piano for the first time in two years was deeply moving. He shared his and Ukraine's story with no language barriers, just the universal language of music.
Kelsey Gonzalez
— ” —



One of the most wonderful experiences in my life. Now I feel much more competent in working with blast injury patients and I know how to improve healthcare with our limited resources. Thank you for this great opportunity to become better at saving lives. I will do my best!

Susanna, Anesthesiology Resident, Medical ICU



CONCLUSION

The fellowship equipped Ukrainian physicians with advanced clinical skills and ignited a passion for systemic change and enhanced collaboration within their healthcare system. Returning to Ukraine, these doctors are ready to drive significant improvements in emergency medicine, trauma surgery, and burn care. This program marks a pivotal step towards building a resilient healthcare system in Ukraine, driven by international cooperation and a commitment to enhancing patient outcomes in conflict-affected regions.

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They will bring new ways to deliver care in their Ukraine hospitals. Even with the stress of war and recent invasion into Kharkiv, they are looking to better themselves and their system.

Dr. Stephen Donnelly

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KEY OUTCOMES

Briefings

Enhanced nurse-to-patient ratios

Evidence-based national protocols

Infection control improvements

Mentorship

Team approach to patient care

Implementing EPIC-like systems for improved patient management



The thing that I was really impressed by was the efficient step-by-step approach according to the algorithm and the really great teamwork. To my view, those are the fundamentals that allow us to achieve a higher level of care despite available resources.

Vlad, Anesthesiology Resident, Cardiac ICU

