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For more information or to support the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program, please contact Nancy Horvath at nancy.horvath@sickkidsfoundation.com or 416-813-8602.
TRANSFORMING THE FUTURE OF CHILD HEALTH IN UKRAINE.

In the past year, through the generous support of donors like you, the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program has enabled Ukrainian physicians to acquire new skills that will allow them to provide better care to children with life-threatening health issues.

IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS

- 4 fellows trained
- 4 fellows set to start training
- 3 advisory trips completed
- 3 children treated with callosotomy for severe, intractable epilepsy in Kyiv
- 10 children treated with new brain tumour surgery techniques in Lviv
- 70 children per year set to benefit from surgery with new neurosurgical endoscope

It has been one year since we launched the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program at SickKids in partnership with Children of Chernobyl Canadian Fund (CCCF) and Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).

This partnership began because of a landmark $1 million donation from CCCF to SickKids which was made possible through a gift from the Estate of Mr. Frederick Tkachuk, a successful former of Ukrainian descent from Melfort, Saskatchewan. Mr. Tkachuk wanted to leave a lasting legacy to help improve children’s health in Ukraine. Through this donation, CCCF worked with SickKids to develop and fund the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program.

Thanks to the commitment and vision of CCCF UCC and many members of the Ukrainian-Canadian community, more than $2,725,000 has been raised towards our $3 million goal to allow the program to achieve its objectives of increasing paediatric health care capacity in Ukraine.

Ukrainian Fellows at SickKids

In the fall of 2013 and the spring of 2014, four Ukrainian physicians came to SickKids for training: Dr. Ihor Humeniuk, a paediatric neurosurgeon, Dr. Yuriy Kizyma, a paediatric oncologist—all from Lviv—as well as Dr. Ivan Protsenko, a paediatric neurosurgeon from Kyiv.

SickKids Advisory Trips to Ukraine

In addition to supporting the fellows, your generous contributions have enabled Dr. James Rutka and other SickKids health professionals to take three advisory trips to Ukraine: one in June 2013, one in May 2014 and another in September 2014. The focus of these trips has been on capacity building. By providing Ukrainian physicians and health workers beyond those who are able to come to SickKids for fellowships—with opportunities to learn from SickKids experts, our life-saving knowledge will spread much faster and farther.

On his most recent visit, Dr. Rutka provided clinical guidance during difficult surgeries—a tumour removal in Kyiv and two brain tumour removals in Lviv. He also gave two lectures at the Annual General Meeting of the Association of Ukrainian Neurosurgeons in Uzhhorod. Dr. Mytykyn explained the importance of these efforts to the success of the program: “We all have struggles and difficulties, but for us it is more than just that, we have a past that follows us, a history of lack of finances and support for quality training, quality books, quality equipment—so Dr. Rutka’s visits for us are not just important, they are a supportive hand to help guide and teach us. I know that even the head of our department is learning new things and enjoying it.”

One of the highlights of the September trip was the delivery of a piece of equipment—a neurosurgical endoscope—that was purchased through donations from the community to CCCF. The equipment will enable surgeons at the Lviv City Children’s Hospital to perform minimally invasive procedures that reduce pain and healing time for young patients. Approximately 70 children a year will benefit from the surgeries the equipment will enable.

At the public announcement of the gift to the hospital, Dr. Rutka said “SickKids is pleased to be collaborating with the medical team at Lviv City Children’s Hospital, who are so committed to learning new knowledge, gaining experience in using cutting-edge neurosurgery technology, and improving the care of children in Ukraine. Working together, we will improve neurosurgical training and care in Ukraine for generations to come.”

Meet Dima and Anya

On a good day, Dmytro (Dima) likes to make jokes and play tricks, giggling delightedly at the reaction of those around him. Thankfully, such days are more common for Dima, since undergoing surgery at SickKids to treat his intractable epilepsy.

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In the fall of 2013 and the spring of 2014, four Ukrainian physicians came to SickKids for intensive training: Drs. Kostiantyn Kostiuk and Volodymyr Fedirko from Kyiv and Drs. Taras Mytykyn and Andrij Kuzyk from Lviv. All four doctors are trained and practicing surgeons.

While at SickKids the doctors were introduced to cutting-edge epilepsy surgery techniques that were pioneered at SickKids. Surgery is typically the only way to treat intractable epilepsy—a form of the disease that does not subside with medication. Despite losing a small part of their brain, patients emerge from surgery with few, if any, side-effects, in large part due to the expert skill of our surgical team. The fellows were able to learn from this expertise and will apply their knowledge to treating patients in Ukraine.

The fellows were also able to observe brain tumour surgery techniques and postoperative care of neurosurgical patients, which have helped them to improve the range of treatment options they can provide their patients as well as postoperative infection control practices at their home hospitals. In addition, they learned new approaches to health systems delivery.

Asked about his experience at SickKids, Dr. Taras Mytykyn explained, “It is not just a chance for me to improve my knowledge or to learn new techniques in paediatric neurosurgery; it is an opportunity to watch and follow some of the best neurosurgeons in the world, in one of the best hospitals in the world. It’s like a dream come true.”

This fall, four more fellows will come to SickKids for training: Dr. Ihor Humeniuk, a paediatric neurosurgeon; Dr. Yura Koliovshka, a paediatric surgeon; and Dr. Roman Kizyma, a paediatric oncologist—all from Lviv—as well as Dr. Ivan Protosenko, a paediatric neurosurgeon from Kyiv.

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“You look better,” is the first thing that his dad, Andrij, says to him. “You look better every day,” is what his mom, Anya, says. Dima’s dad says “Try to eat better,” and his mom says “Try to sleep better.”

From left to right: Drs. Taras Mytykyn, James Rutka, and Kostiantyn Kostiuk.

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