

2015

*impact report*

# TRANS- FORMING CHILD HEALTH

UKRAINE PAEDIATRIC  
FELLOWSHIP  
PROGRAM



**SickKids®**

Centre for  
Global Child Health



**Children of  
Chornobyl  
Canadian Fund**  
unlocking the door to  
their future





**Neurosurgeons Dr. Oleh Savka from Lviv and Dr. Mykhailo Lovha from Lutsk** are the most recent Ukrainian fellows to come to SickKids

## Building Capacity in Ukraine to Care for Critically ill Children

**Since inception, through the generous support of donors like you, the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program has enabled eight fellows to come to SickKids and conducted five advisory trips to Ukraine. With eight fellows scheduled to come to SickKids before the end of 2015, the pace of the Program's impact is picking up speed.**

**T**hanks to the commitment and vision of Children of Chernobyl Canadian Fund (CCCF), Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), and many members of the Ukrainian-Canadian community, the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program has had another highly successful year. The number of fellows coming to SickKids is growing; the two most recent mission visits to Ukraine have been very well received; and, most importantly, children in Ukraine are benefitting from access to improved care.

### Ukrainian Fellows at SickKids

Last fall, four fellows came to SickKids for training: Dr. Ihor Humeniuk, a paediatric neurosurgeon; Dr. Yuriy Kolivoshko, a paediatric surgeon; and Dr. Roman Kizyma, a paediatric oncologist—all from Lviv—as well as Dr. Ivan Protsenko, a paediatric neurosurgeon from Kyiv. This past spring, Dr. Nataliia Sverhun, a paediatric cancer researcher, came to SickKids to work and learn in Dr. James Rutka's brain tumour research lab. Earlier this fall Dr. Oleh Savka, a neurosurgeon from Lviv, and Dr. Mykhailo Lovha, a paediatric neurosurgeon from Lutsk

### PROGRAM IMPACT SINCE 2013

**433%**

Increase in epilepsy patient referrals from specialists in Ukraine

The Program has enabled Ukrainian physicians to acquire new surgical techniques for treating children with epilepsy. The implementation of these techniques, as well as the adoption of a more collaborative care model suggested by SickKids, has led to an increase in the number of referrals of patients to the Romodanov Institute of Neurosurgery in Kyiv from neurologists across Ukraine.

**8**

Fellows Trained

**5**

Advisory Trips Completed

**8**

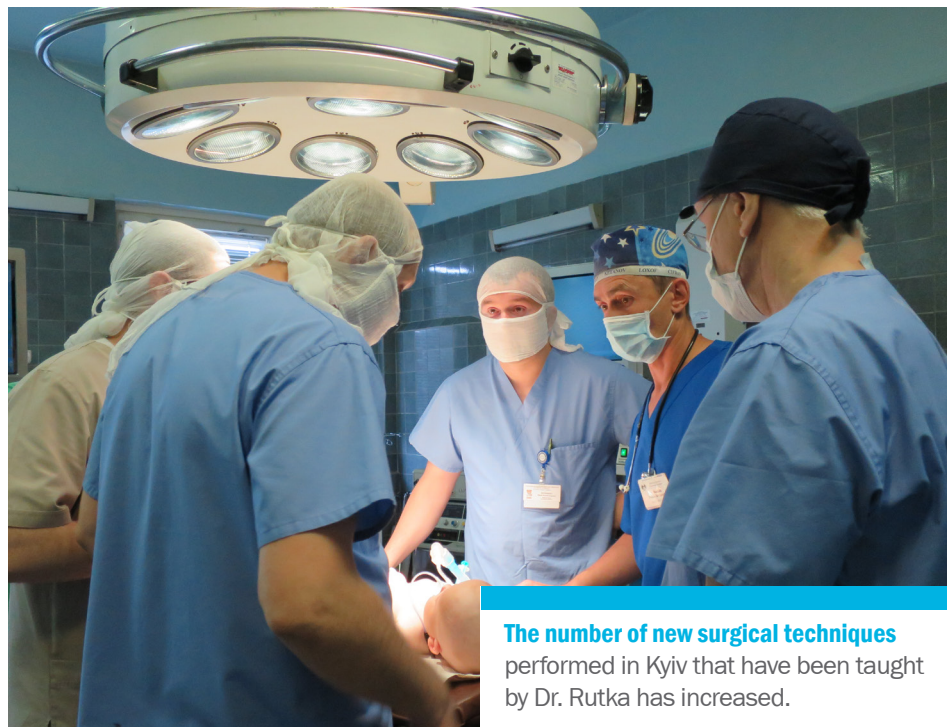
Fellows Selected for Training in 2015/16



spent a month observing at SickKids. And later this fall five more fellows are due to arrive: Dr. Valerij Cheburakhin, a neurosurgeon from Kyiv; Dr. Solomiia Lukavetska-Seniv, a paediatric radiologist and Dr. Taras Mykytyn, a paediatric neurosurgeon; Dr. Lyudmila Bober, a paediatrician specializing in cystic fibrosis; and Dr. Halyna Makukh, a geneticist specializing in cystic fibrosis—all from Lviv.

Paediatric Neurosurgeon Dr. Mykhailo Lovha and Neurosurgeon Dr. Oleh Savka—the most recent visiting fellows—were impressed by the level of collaboration between different health-care professionals at SickKids. They observed that in preparing for a brain tumour surgery, the neurosurgeon works closely with not just the surgical team, but also the oncologist to carefully plan the surgery to ensure the best possible outcome for the patient. Previous fellows have made similar observations and two of them—Dr. Taras Mykytyn, a neurosurgeon, and Dr. Roman Kizyma, an oncologist—began working together more closely after returning to Ukraine. They connected through the Program, saw the benefit of a more collaborative approach to care and worked to change their practices once they returned. In this way, the Program is not just teaching Ukrainian fellows advanced surgical techniques and exposing them to state-of-the-art equipment; it is helping to shift the culture in Ukrainian hospitals.

Two recent highlights of the Program are worth sharing. The first is the return of Dr. Taras Mykytyn to SickKids this November. Dr. Mykytyn first came to SickKids in the fall of 2013. This fall, he will be coming back for a second observership to learn about using a neurosurgical endoscope. Thanks to the generous support of CCCF, SickKids was able to purchase a neurosurgical endoscope for the Lviv City Children's



#### The number of new surgical techniques

performed in Kyiv that have been taught by Dr. Rutka has increased.

Hospital, where Dr. Mykytyn works. Through his training at SickKids, Dr. Mykytyn will be able to maximize the use of the new equipment to perform minimally invasive procedures that reduce pain and healing time for patients.

The second highlight is the return of Dr. Yuriy Kolivoshko to SickKids in early 2016. During his first month-long visit, Dr. Kolivoshko observed Dr. Agostino Pierro, Head of General and Thoracic Surgery, before returning to Ukraine. Wanting to further expand his skills, Dr. Kolivoshko successfully competed for a prestigious 18-month fellowship at SickKids, which will enable him to not only observe, but also practice surgery alongside our experts while he is here.

These return fellows demonstrate the strengthening ties between SickKids and a growing number of institutions in Ukraine. What began as a partnership between SickKids, Lviv City Children's Clinical Hospital and the Romodanov Institute of Neurosurgery, has expanded

to include the National Cancer Institute of Ukraine, the Volyn Regional Children's Clinical Hospital in Lutsk and several other associations and government agencies as partners.

#### SickKids Advisory Trips to Ukraine

In addition to supporting visiting fellows, your generous contributions have enabled Dr. James Rutka, Dr. Myroslava Romach and other SickKids health professionals to take two advisory trips to Ukraine: one in June 2015 and another in October 2015. The latter was underway at the time of writing and will be reported on in the next report.

The June 2015 visiting team included Dr. James Rutka, Dr. Myroslava Romach, Ms. Tatiana Lipman, a researcher in the Arthur and Sonia Labatt Brain Tumour Research Centre at SickKids, and Dr. Sharifa Himidan, a general surgeon at SickKids. The focus on the trip was once again on capacity building, but the team also took time to work on expanding the program to encompass

the fields of neonatal care, with a focus on congenital abnormalities, and maternal and child health, with a focus on perinatal maternal depression.

Capacity building efforts took the form of lectures on the most relevant topics in paediatric medicine as well as direct training and supervision of young surgeons in the latest surgical techniques.

During a morning conference at the Romodanov Institute of Neurosurgery in Kyiv, the visiting team was pleased to learn that since the start of the Program, the number of referrals of patients to the Institute from neurologists in and outside of Kyiv has increased significantly as part of a more collaborative model suggested by SickKids. Whereas in the past only 15 per cent of referrals came from outside neurologists and epileptologists, now almost 80 per cent are being referred to the Institute from outside. The number of new surgical techniques performed that have been taught by Dr. Rutka also increased. Eleven patients have undergone corpus callosotomy; six patients have undergone resection of focal cortical dysplastic lesions; and four have had multi-lobar resections for epilepsy.

A similar conference was organized at the Lviv City Children's Clinical Hospital with approximately 60 surgeons and researchers attending.

The participating Ukrainian institutions had been asked to select patient cases for review by the SickKids team and for an assisted surgical intervention. In both Kyiv and Lviv, one day was dedicated to patient consultations and one to operative cases.

In Kyiv, the patient chosen for an assisted intervention was an eight-year-old boy with a temporal lobe tumour who was suffering from associated seizures. Dr. Rutka instructed Dr. Kostiantyn Kostiuk, a former visiting fellow, and others how to approach the tumour using neuronavigation and microneurosurgical techniques. The tumour was completely removed and proved to be a ganglioglioma—a rare type of tumour that accounts for only 10 per cent of all primary brain tumours in children. Following the surgery Dr. Rutka consulted on over 10 difficult cases and held discussions with other paediatric neurosurgeons to learn more about some of the challenges they face in their practice.

In Lviv, Dr. Rutka assisted with two operations, both on children with

hydrocephalus—a build up of fluid in the ventricles of the brain that puts pressure on the brain. The first operation was an *endoscopic third ventriculostomy* (ETV) and was performed by Drs. Taras Mykytyn and Kostiantyn Bihanych. This was the first time an ETV was performed at the Lviv City Children's Clinical Hospital using the equipment donated by the Program.

Following the surgeries, Dr. Rutka consulted on 15 difficult cases with neurosurgeons and had the opportunity to see two patients he had advised on the previous year for surgical removal of tumours. One patient, Anastasija Javorska, (see photo of Dr. Rutka and child on cover) had a malignant brain tumour that Ukrainian surgeons did not have the expertise to remove surgically. Without Dr. Rutka's guidance, the child would have succumbed to her illness. Instead, her surgery went very well and she is currently responding to chemotherapy.

### Thank You

Thanks to the dedication of generous donors like you the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program continues to achieve its objectives of building capacity and improving child health. We are so grateful for your support!

If you have any questions regarding the information included in this report, please contact:

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