



Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program

Your Investment. Your Impact.

We are profoundly grateful for your support of the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program. Thanks to your commitment, this past year the program made it possible for four Ukrainian doctors to come to SickKids for intensive training while also enabling SickKids experts to take advisory trips to Ukraine.



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

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 (CCCCF) and Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).

This partnership began because of a landmark \$1 million donation from CCCCf to SickKids which was made possible through a gift from the Estate of Mr. Frederick Tkachuk, a successful farmer 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, CCCCf worked with SickKids to develop and fund the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program.

Thanks to the commitment and vision of CCCCf, 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 intensive training. Drs. Kostiantyn Kostiuk and Volodymyr Fedirko from Kyiv and Drs. Taras Mytykyn and Andriy 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 Kolivoshka,



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

a paediatric surgeon; and Dr. Roman 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 CCCE. 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.

“We just wanted to say thank you for the work you do to make our dreams come true for the betterment of Ukrainian children. We truly do appreciate your commitment and the people in Canada who have supported this to make it a reality for us! Thank you once again.”

~ Ukrainian Physicians

For Dima, the condition meant life-threatening seizures every day that would cause him to stop breathing and turn blue. It meant he could not attend school and had to stay home with his grandmother while his mother Anya went to work. The physical and emotional strain took their toll on Dima. He couldn't walk or talk and had great difficulty communicating.

Doctors in Ukraine believed the only hope for Dima was surgery to remove the part of his brain causing the seizures, but no surgeons in Ukraine had the expertise to perform such a complex surgery.

Then an opportunity was arranged through Dima's doctor, Kostiantyn Kostiuk, and the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program that gave them hope. SickKids neurosurgeon Dr. James Rutka was visiting Ukraine to meet candidates for the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program. Dr. Rutka interviewed Dr. Kostiuk as one of the potential (ultimately successful) candidates. As part of his visit to the hospital in Kyiv, Dr. Rutka also set aside time to see some of Dr. Kostiuk's more challenging cases. Dima was one of them.

Just under a year later, Dima and his mother flew to Toronto—a trip made possible through the generous support of the Herbie Fund. The Ukrainian-Canadian community helped find host families who made Dima and his mother feel at home during their stay and on April 28, 2014 Dima underwent a hemispherectomy to remove the part of his brain that no drugs and other treatments could fix. The surgery was a success, helping alleviate the debilitating seizures, drastically improving Dima's quality of life.

Now back in Ukraine, Dima has been seizure free for six months. He is able to walk and feed himself with a fork. His mother Anya has been able to sleep through the night for the first time in nine years because she no longer has to wake up to give him injections. Anya doesn't have the words to describe how grateful she is to all of the doctors, health-care professionals and donors who made her son's surgery possible. "I hold you in the highest regard," she says. "You've given us hope."

Thank You

The Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program has had a remarkably successful start, thanks to the support of donors like you. In the words of one of the participating physicians, the program is "like the air that we need." Program administrators are now connecting with contacts in neurology, neonatology and respirology to explore expanding the program beyond the original focus on neurosurgery. We are so grateful for your support and look forward to sharing further updates with you about our progress in the future.

Dima, epilepsy patient, and his mother, Anya



For more information or to support the Ukraine Paediatric Fellowship Program, please contact Nancy Horvath at nancy.horvath@sickkidsfoundation.com or 416-813-8602.

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