

Public Awareness of the Cooperation Between the Who and Ukraine Under Martial Law

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Introduction

The full-scale war in Ukraine has posed unprecedented challenges for the healthcare system: more than 2000 attacks on medical facilities and personnel, with about 40% of the population in need of humanitarian aid [1,2]. As a result of destruction and population displacement, the provision of basic medical services has been disrupted, and thousands of children have not received routine vaccinations against polio, measles, diphtheria, etc [3]. In such conditions, international support, particularly from the WHO, is crucial. Since the first days of the war, the organization has been providing Ukraine with medicines, equipment, and access to medical services, especially in frontline regions, helping more than 8.4 million people [4]. In December 2023, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine and the WHO Regional Office for Europe signed a two-year cooperation agreement (2024-2025), which defines joint priorities: emergency response, integrated services, infection prevention, strengthening system resilience, and preparing for integration into the European health space [5,6]. In times of crisis, it is important to study public opinion on international support in the field of health care. Public awareness of WHO activities and Ukraine's cooperation with it reflects the level of communication and trust in the measures being implemented. Feedback helps to identify problems and improve coordination of actions. The aim of the study is to assess public awareness of Ukraine's cooperation with the WHO during the war and to analyze public assessment of its effectiveness and needs.

Methods

The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire (Google Forms) containing 10 questions: nine closed and one open. The survey covered key aspects of Ukraine's interaction with the WHO during the war - awareness, assessment of the effectiveness of assistance, experience of receiving support, priorities and needs, cooperation with medical institutions, media coverage, accessibility of services, and willingness to participate in training programs. The survey ran from December 2024 to March 2025. A total of 225 respondents aged 21-55 took part. Two groups were formed for analysis:

- I. individuals without medical education (100 individuals)
- II. medical workers or individuals involved in the healthcare system (125 individuals). The results were processed using descriptive statistical methods and presented as a percentage distribution of responses by group.

Results

The WHO is a strategic partner for Ukraine in the areas of technical and regulatory support, policy development, and standardization at the national, regional, local, and international levels. As a WHO member state, Ukraine participates in shaping the global health agenda; in particular, Ukraine's representative is a member of the WHO Regional Executive Board for Europe for 2023-2026, which strengthens the country's influence on regional policy. The full-scale war has

confirmed that such challenges can only be overcome through joint efforts with strategic partners, and for Ukraine, the WHO is such a partner. The cooperation strategy for 2023-2030 sets out priorities for supporting and reforming the health system, taking into account the consequences of COVID-19 and the war. Key areas include:

1. Ensuring universal access to quality care, including emergency response, multidisciplinary outpatient care, the introduction of integrated service packages, and strengthening the financial sustainability of the system.
2. Reducing the prevalence of health risk factors by intensifying prevention, promoting healthy lifestyles, and combating infectious and non-infectious diseases.
3. Developing capable institutions and a modern regulatory framework, improving planning and human resource management, increasing preparedness for epidemic threats and emergencies, and harmonizing protocols and standards with EU norms.

In response to the challenges of war, WHO is providing critically needed medical supplies, deploying mobile medical services, supporting frontline facilities, and strengthening disease surveillance and outbreak response mechanisms. At the same time, it is continuing to restore and expand services in the most affected regions, develop mental health systems, support internally displaced persons, and restore the services necessary for the continuous operation of health facilities. The strategic goal is to build an adaptive, effective, and resilient health system capable of withstanding future threats. Given the profound socio-economic and political changes of wartime, it is important to study public opinion, including the level of public awareness of Ukraine's interaction with the WHO. Feedback from different social groups allows us to identify problem areas, increase transparency, and adjust the coordination of efforts. The results of our study revealed the following features. When asked about their awareness of WHO activities during the war, 59 % of Group I respondents answered "I have heard something, but not many details," 39% answered "I am well informed," and 2 % answered "I don't know." In Group II, the figures were 44%, 54.4%, and 1.6%, respectively. In other words, specialists are better informed, while the general public has only fragmentary knowledge. Among the known areas of activity, psychological support and rehabilitation, medical humanitarian aid, and training and preparation of medical workers were most often mentioned. Knowledge about the prevention of infectious diseases is significantly

Medical professionals are more likely to have personal or indirect experience of interacting with WHO assistance: in group I, 70 % had no such experience, 14 % knew of assistance provided to colleagues, and 7% had received it personally; in group II, the figures were 52.8%, 27,7 %, and 15,4 %, respectively. Regarding the most needed forms of support, both groups noted medical evacuation and assistance to

the wounded, psychological support, and the provision of medicines and equipment; a significant proportion of respondents additionally emphasized the importance of vaccination and outbreak prevention. When assessing WHO cooperation with Ukrainian medical institutions, the majority consider it to be present but insufficient (59 % in group I and 66.7% in group II). Only 22 % and 12,2 %, respectively, rate it as high; 17 % to 19 % were undecided. Regarding media coverage of WHO activities, only 16 % of non-medical professionals and 23, 1% of medical professionals consider the amount of information to be sufficient. More than half of the respondents in each group expect more active communication; about 12 % note a lack or inaccuracy of information, and another 12-14 % are not interested in the topic. The assessment of the availability of WHO-supported services in the regions of residence revealed significant uncertainty: about a third of respondents in each group cannot assess it, many point to the existence of logistical barriers; only 15,7 % of medical professionals and about a fifth of non-medical professionals believe that it is easy to get help.

There is a high level of willingness to participate in WHO training programs: among non-medical professionals, 28 % answered "yes, definitely" and 70 % answered "maybe, if the topic is relevant"; among medical professionals, these figures are 54,4 % and 42,3 % respectively, with only 3,3 % seeing no need for such programs. Responses to an open-ended question with suggestions for improving cooperation most often concerned more active public information, transparent reporting and open data, acceleration and expansion of humanitarian aid, better coordination with Ukrainian institutions, strengthening prevention, training, and mental health support, restoring medical infrastructure, improving logistics, and expanding work directly in communities and cities.

Overall, the results indicate a need to deepen communication between WHO, the Ukrainian health system, and the general public, taking into account the specific needs of different groups. A combination of transparent information policy, effective local coordination, and investment in resources, infrastructure, and human capital will increase trust, improve access to care, and accelerate the achievement of strategic goals in the health sector.

Conclusion

The war period not only revealed the vulnerability of the Ukrainian healthcare system, but also confirmed that its resilience largely depends on international support. Ukraine's cooperation with the WHO has become an important factor in the stability of the sector, ensuring coordination of efforts, humanitarian aid, and institutional capacity development. The study showed that the population generally has a positive attitude towards WHO activities, but also revealed a need for greater transparency and communication with the public. It is necessary to inform the population more widely about the programs and results of cooperation and to develop partnerships at the local level so that every medical professional and patient can truly feel the support

of the organization. Implementing the recommendations proposed by citizens - from improving logistics to increasing transparency - will contribute to the growth of international aid effectiveness. Given the long-term consequences of the war, the partnership between Ukraine and WHO must remain strategic, adaptive, and people-centered, ensuring the restoration and modernization of the health system in the post-war period.

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