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CURRENT ISSUES OF TEACHING FAMILY MEDICINE IN THE CONDITIONS OF WAR IN UKRAINE

War seems to have been a terrible factor in the lives of people across the globe throughout history. Major wars are currently being fought in Ukraine, Sudan, and other African countries and in the Middle East, and other military conflicts are occurring on many continents. Family medicine or its counterparts, such as general practice, are the backbone of many health care systems, including those in Ukraine, Israel, and the Gaza Strip. And family physicians are often called upon to perform expanded functions during times of war. These physicians often witness the immense mental and physical trauma and suffering that individuals, families, communities, and populations experience. This article focuses on the ongoing war in Ukraine and our experience working with family medicine interns in these settings¹.

¹ Borkan JM. Family Medicine in Times of War. *Ann Fam Med.* 2024 Nov 25;22(6):539-542. doi: 10.1370/afm.3172. PMID: 39586688; PMCID: PMC11588373.

Teaching family medicine is an integral element of training future doctors in any conditions, but in war conditions it becomes especially important. The family medicine course provides knowledge and skills that will help doctors help those who need medical care in unpredictable and often (in temporarily occupied territories and near the front line) dangerous conditions.

It must be taken into account that graduates may find themselves in the ranks of the active army, so it must be remembered that military service is different from civilian medical practice, and doctors serving in the army must have additional competencies that meet the specifics of military medicine and its needs. In wartime, when large numbers of people are exposed to physical and psychological trauma, the military and tactical medicine skills of a general practitioner can save lives and prevent further complications, in particular, the practical use of medical triage is vital. Military physicians must have knowledge and skills about medical care in combat conditions, about the evacuation of the wounded, and about the treatment of the sick and wounded on the front lines.

One of the most important components of family medicine training in wartime is training interns to work in emergency situations. This means that interns must have the knowledge and practical skills to operate under limited time and access to medical resources necessary to provide medical care. They must also be able to work in a team and ensure their own safety and the safety of their patients².

A general practitioner must be able to cooperate with local governments, volunteer groups, and other medical professionals, which can help organize effective and coordinated medical care in the field.

Korzh O. states that in war conditions family medicine is more than just primary care. In addition to caring for the health of the patients (often working overtime), they have additional roles, including non-medical volunteer work. In the early months of the

² Блоха Я.Є., Іваницький І.В., Усанова Л.А., Іваницька Т.А. Проблема самоідентифікації сімейного лікаря в умовах медичної реформи: соціально-філософський аналіз. Молодий вчений. 2019. № 4 (68). С.215-219.

war, family doctors often treated internally displaced Ukrainians who were experiencing stress and needed support. The daily work of family doctors has changed as patients' mental health needs have increased, often requiring psychological counseling. We also have to provide medical care to the wounded³.

Family medicine training in wartime, in addition to mastering theoretical knowledge and skills, should also include practical training for interns. This means that interns should have the opportunity to visit medical institutions where medical care is provided to war victims, participate in treatment and rehabilitation. Such practice will help to understand the importance of a comprehensive approach to providing medical care, inherent in family medicine⁴, in wartime and will help to prepare for similar situations in the future.

An important element of teaching family medicine in wartime is to support relevant scientific research by intern doctors both in higher education institutions and at internship bases. This will help to expand the knowledge of applicants about effective treatment methods and help in the development of new technologies and approaches to medical care⁵.

The peculiarities of teaching family medicine in wartime are to take into account the needs of the military, the conditions and specifics of their life activities. For example, doctors serving in the army should have knowledge about the impact of stress factors on the health of military personnel, about the prevention and treatment of military injuries, as well as about the relationship between mental health and military activity in conditions of hot conflict and know how to prevent adverse consequences.

³ Korzh O. Family physicians in Ukraine: Caring for patients during the war. *Canadian Family Physician*. Published Oct 28, 2022. Accessed Apr 7, 2024. <https://www.cfp.ca/news/2022/10/28/10-28>

⁴ Ждан В.М., Бабаніна М.Ю., Кігура Є.М., Шилкіна Л.М., Іваницький І.В., Волченко Г.В., Ткаченко М.В., Кир'ян О.А. Організація навчання лікарів-інтернів на кафедрі сімейної медицини і терапії. *Медичні перспективи*. 2017. №2. ч.1. С. 99 – 101

⁵ Ждан В.М., Іваницький І.В., Катеренчук О.І., Хайменова Г.С., Кир'ян О.А., Шилкіна Л.М. Використання можливостей навчально – практичного центру сімейної медицини у формуванні професійних навичок сімейного лікаря. *Сучасна медична освіта: методологія, теорія, практика*. 2020. С.84 – 85.

In addition, teaching family medicine in conditions of martial law should take into account the peculiarities of organizing medical care in the army. Doctors serving in the army should know about the structure and functioning of the medical service, the rules and procedures for processing military medical documentation, and the peculiarities of interaction with other military services and units.

One of the key components of teaching family medicine in conditions of martial law is in-depth attention to the doctors' mastery of prophylactic measures and prevention of medical problems. This may include teaching military personnel the basics of a healthy lifestyle, prevention of injuries and diseases, preventive vaccinations, and other measures.

It is also important to pay attention to the interaction of military doctors with civilian medical institutions and organizations. This may be particularly important in today's context, where military medical resources may be overstretched. Consideration should be given to the capabilities and limitations of civilian medical facilities, the organization and coordination of emergency medical care, interactions with medical services in other countries, etc. In addition to theoretical training, it is also important to provide access to medical equipment and materials so that they can practically acquire the above-mentioned competencies^{6/7}. This may include training physicians in the use of various types of medical equipment, such as portable diagnostic devices, telemedicine systems, etc.

Finally, teaching family medicine in a military context should take into account the psychological state of military physicians and their relationships with military personnel. Military physicians may face stressful situations related to service in military conflict, so it is important to provide them with appropriate support and psychological assistance.

⁶ Ждан В.М., Іваницький І.В., Катеренчук О.І., Хайменова Г.С., Кир'ян О.А., Шилкіна Л.М. Використання можливостей навчально – практичного центру сімейної медицини у формуванні професійних навичок сімейного лікаря. Сучасна медична освіта: методологія, теорія, практика. 2020. С.84 – 85.

⁷ Іваницький І.В., Блоха Я.Є., Іваницька Т.А. До питання самоідентифікації сімейного лікаря в умовах медичної реформи. Сучасна медична освіта: методологія, теорія, практика. 2020. С.92 – 94.

In general, the teaching of family medicine in military conditions should be focused on ensuring the highest level of medical care in stressful and emergency situations. This requires special training, knowledge of the specifics of working in military conflict, as well as support and coordination with civilian medical institutions.

Despite all the challenges and difficulties associated with teaching family medicine in military conditions, it is important to remember that such training can save thousands of lives, so its importance cannot be underestimated. To achieve this goal, the teaching of family medicine in military conditions should focus on the following aspects:

1. Increasing the number of hours devoted to the study of family medicine in military conditions. Given the complexity of working in conflict situations, medical workers must have sufficient knowledge and skills to provide medical care in difficult situations.

2. Development of specialized family medicine training programs in wartime. These programs should include theoretical and practical classes in disaster medicine, work with stressful situations, and preparation for providing medical care to military personnel and civilians.

3. Use of the latest technologies and interactive teaching methods. This may include video and online lectures, simulators, virtual technologies and other means that ensure the effectiveness and convenience of training.

4. Cooperation with local and international medical organizations. Such cooperation will allow access to best practices and experience in the field of providing medical care in military conflicts, and will also facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge between different countries and regions.

5. Use of modern medical standards and protocols.

Therefore, teaching family medicine in wartime is an important component of training medical professionals who will be able to provide effective and individualized medical care in the difficult conditions of military operations. General practitioner can be

the first to provide medical care and help the injured in the affected area. It is important to continue to develop this field and provide the necessary knowledge and skills to future medical professionals to provide proper medical care in conditions of full-scale military conflict and restore the health of the population.

Family physicians can serve as moral guides to ensure that medical care is not transformed into a service of evil by preventing and detecting crimes against humanity, upholding the healing that is central to the practice of medicine, and nurturing and supporting morally courageous health professionals with context and history who speak up when necessary. Family medicine, like all medicine, can be subject to manipulation, whether intentional or unintentional, and physicians must be constantly alert to conflicts to avoid them and to ensure that medical ethics are actively upheld and upheld⁸.

In addition, it is important not to forget about supporting general practitioners who work in conditions of military operations and their consequences. Stress, fatigue and emotional overload can affect the mental and physical health of medical workers. To ensure the highest level of medical care in wartime, it is important to ensure the support and development of a network of institutions providing primary medical care.

⁸ Vinker S, Hummers E, Rochfort A, et al. ; WONCA . European family physicians appeal to STOP WAR. Published Feb 27, 2022. Accessed Mar 1, 2024. <https://www.woncaeurope.org/news/view/european-family-physicians-appeal-to-stop-war>