

War in Ukraine: the opportunities for oncogynecologic patients in Poland

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Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the structure of medical care has changed drastically. While most patients are leaving the eastern and central regions, hospitals in western Ukraine have taken over the majority of treatments of patients with cancer. One of our missions became assisting the patients to overcome their anxiety about their loss of certainty and further treatment. Psychosocial support became a crucial part of healthcare in the new reality. Moreover, several volunteer groups help to transfer patients to neighboring countries if there is such a need. Still, many doctors in the war regions did not stop their work, even under fire. To date, many centers have resumed their work to help Ukrainian patients despite the constant sounds of sirens.

Simultaneously, since February 24, over 4 million Ukrainians have had to leave their country, almost 2.5 million crossed the Polish–Ukrainian border. The majority of them are women and children, and among them there are

numerous patients being treated for gynecological malignancies.¹ Only a few days after the beginning of the war, the Polish Society of Gynecologic Oncology began coordinating the treatment of Ukrainian patients with gynecological cancers. The cooperative initiative is run by both Polish and Ukrainian oncogynecologists, and is based on the network of interpersonal contacts (Figure 1). The project aims to coordinate the arrival of patients in Poland, their accommodation, and allocating them to institutions where they receive appropriate treatment and support. Thanks to close cooperation between doctors from both sides of the border, the patients are not left without oncological care.

The women who crossed the border by themselves are also welcomed in Polish hospitals. Many institutions opened special help desks where Ukrainian-speaking personnel advise these patients where they can receive medical help. An example is the National Institute

of Oncology in Warsaw, where official Ukrainian translators work, to help patients with communication and translation of medical documentation. Among the patients, there are women in various clinical situations, but the majority are patients with ovarian cancer who have already started treatment in Ukraine and could not continue due to the military aggression. Some were directly evacuated by medical transport, some crossed the border on foot with the abdominal drain just a few days after surgery. Operations were planned for others, but the war thwarted the plans. Many Ukrainian patients successfully continue their treatment in Polish institutions. Cytoreductive surgeries, chemotherapy cycles, and radiotherapy sessions are now being performed daily.

Such initiatives were possible due to the rapid changes in Polish regulations supporting Ukrainians.² Ukrainian citizens are now fully entitled to receive medical care financed from public funds provided

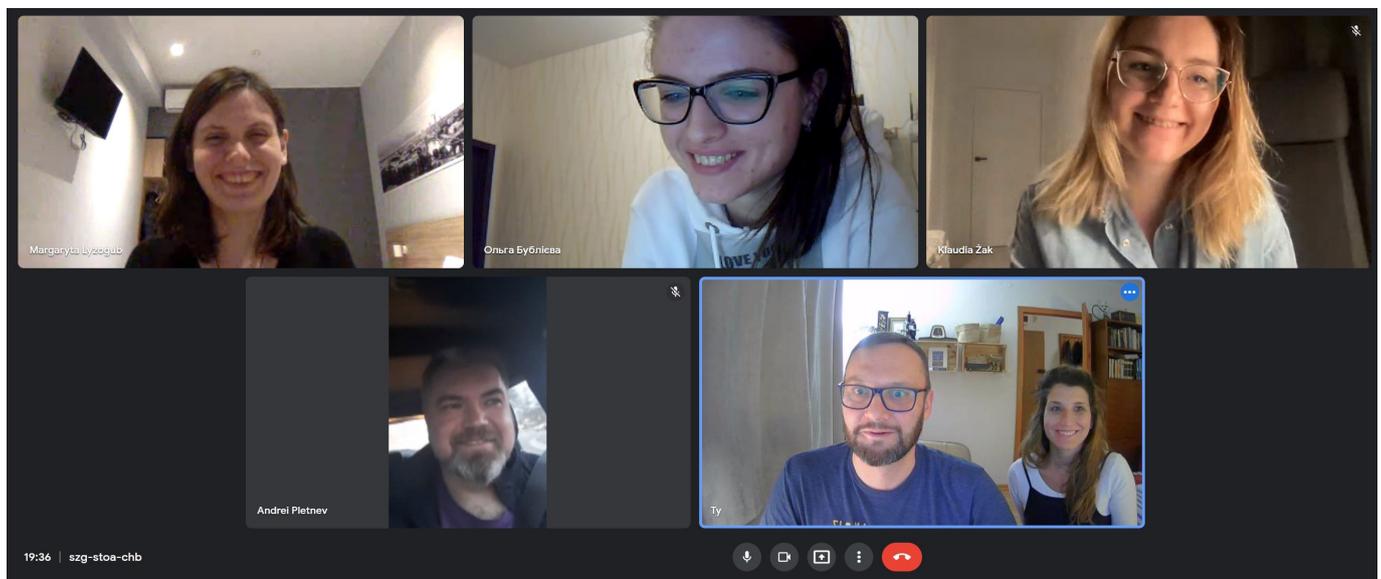


Figure 1 Meeting of the Polish–Ukrainian cooperative (April 5, 2022).

Corners of the world

in the territory of Poland. The healthcare services are identical to the conditions provided to Polish citizens. Additionally, in March 2022 the Polish Parliament passed an act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens. This act defines simplified rules allowing Ukrainian medical professionals to practice in Poland. Doctors are eligible to provide services for Ukrainian citizens, and therefore to have a contract with the National Health Fund. To date, many Ukrainian centers have resumed their work, but if it is not possible to provide care for patients, the Polish healthcare system still has the capacity to help oncological patients from Ukraine, and the Polish Society of Gynecologic Oncology provides the support for them.

To let us know about a patient in need, you can fill in the online form providing us some details and contact information: <https://docs.google.com/forms/>

d/1d9456VgayN_mrBxXUS8f_pUI_eXwPmhflcGoA4Bmc30/viewform?edit_requested=true

For further details check the website: <https://ptgo.pl/help-for-ukrainian-patients/>

You may also contact us via email: ukraina@ptgo.pl

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