

Far-echoing Voice - Documenting the Consequences of the War in Ukraine in Medical Journals

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The Russian aggression against Ukraine began in 2014 with the Russian annexation of Crimea and escalated into a full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. The war taking place on the territory of Ukraine is still raging mercilessly two and a half years after its beginning. According to the estimation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, it has claimed over 30,000 Ukrainian civilian casualties so far. There are no reliable data on Ukrainian military losses, with the estimates varying between 30 and 50 thousand lost lives.¹⁻³ To better understand the devastating and far-reaching consequences of the current war in Europe, we have to know that in the first 17 months of the war, almost 50,000 Ukrainians underwent amputations due to injuries from land mines and other heavy artillery. That is a scale only comparable to the number of amputations during brutal World War I.⁴ The consequences of severe injuries will be permanently suffered by over 200,000 Ukrainians who have been injured so far, but also by their families and society in general.

The experience of the Croatian War of Independence makes us especially sensitive to the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The best way for scientists to fight the war is to continue their research and produce scientific papers. To systematically and objectively document war injuries and the consequences of destruction is invaluable. In the early 1990s, Professor Matko Marušić showed the suitable model by founding the renowned Croatian Medical Journal. He also educated many Croatian scientists who published over 360 scientific articles in English on the Croatian War of Independence, mostly in high-

rank international medical journals.⁵

Encouraged by the example mentioned above, Professor Damir Sapunar, Head of the Translational Research in Medicine PhD Program at the University of Split, and Professor Livia Puljak, Head of the Center for Evidence-Based Medicine and Healthcare at the Catholic University of Croatia, decided to help Ukrainian colleagues and scientists with what they knew the best, which was teaching methodology and writing scientific papers. Two altruistic Croatian scientists visited Ukraine in March 2024, where they held a series of lectures and workshops on planning research and writing articles. The cooperation continued even after their return to Croatia. Professors Sapunar and Puljak consider assistance in translating, editing, and publishing papers in English on the suffering of the Ukrainian people to be a social responsibility. To date, ten scientific papers have been published within this noble project called "Giving Voice".⁶

Zadar and its surroundings suffered great destruction during the Croatian War of Independence, and most of the wounded civilians and soldiers were treated in Zadar General Hospital. The doctors who participated in the treatment of complex injuries in wounded civilians and soldiers also contributed through the production of scientific papers, congress abstracts, and reviews. The most comprehensive report on the situation in the war-affected hospital in Zadar was published by Professor Neven Skitarelić in the Proceedings on the Croatian War of Independence.^{7,8} There is still a lot of data in the hospital archive available to enthusiastic young doctors to discover. More research could produce

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papers describing surgical endeavors that older surgeons anecdotally recount to residents.

Publishing the consequences of war destruction is a social responsibility. Therefore, our duty as doctors is to document the spectrum of war injuries and treatment in the same way as continuing professional medical education. The journal *Medica Jadertina* supports the publication of peer-reviewed scientific papers so that the truth reaches as broad as possible an audience.

Thus, the war-affected Ukrainian doctors can disseminate their papers in international, indexed medical journals.

We are proud to publish a retrospective study from Ukraine by Horoshko and colleagues in this issue. The study explores the high incidence of chronic pain after a combat injury, the profound impact of acute stress reaction, and post-traumatic stress disorder on the perception of pain, recovery, and quality of life of soldiers after the treatment.⁹

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