

Strengthening Rehabilitation Systems for Sustainable Outcomes: A Policy Framework for Action

Andrea Popa ¹, Christian Gutenbrunner²

a.popa@hotmail.com¹, christoph.gutenbrunner@gmail.com²

Researcher, Digitalization in Healthcare¹

Department of Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine Hannover Medical School²

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ABSTRACT

Background and Objective In times of conflict, the international community often immediately and generously provides medical and humanitarian support. This assistance provides relief from short-term overburdening of established systems and structures and helps mitigate suffering in urgent cases. At the same time, as soon as funds and supplies cease to flow, care-gaps and treatment disruptions emerge for many of those previously assisted. For example, the Ukraine boasts an established healthcare and insurance system and was in the process of implementing a rehabilitation system according to international standards guided by WHO framework, including building its professional rehabilitation and service capacities. After February 2022, rehabilitation needs of the Ukrainian population skyrocketed due to the effects of armed conflict, both in terms of quantity and quality of services. This immediately strained established resources and structures. The international outpour of financial and material support continues to provide immediate structural relief. However, the Ukrainian government recognizes the growing treatment gap that can only be addressed by continuously building the rehabilitation system towards resilience to successfully cope with the unprecedented number of patients who will rely on the system for years to come, e.g., as is the case for amputees. **Methodology and Results** We evaluate the status quo based on information collected from interviews with Ukrainian experts from health care and government sectors, analyze documents and policy briefs, and consider general principles regarding strengthening health systems and disaster management. A tiered policy framework for action is developed as a guideline for third-party nations seeking to provide sustainable and capacity-building support towards Ukraine's goal of continuously developing a robust, holistic rehabilitation system. **Conclusions** In addition to the policy framework for action in the specific context of the Ukraine today, we derive transferable recommendations for governments seeking to assist regions wrought by conflict in an empowering, supportive manner.