

The Ukrainian system of medical education is considered to be both one of the highest quality and relative affordability in the world, and therefore attracts thousands of native and foreign medical students each year.¹ Medical undergraduates begin their training immediately after completing secondary education, and study for a 6-year period in one of the country's 14 medical universities and academies to earn a Specialist's Diploma (corresponding to an MD/MBBS).¹

The diploma reflects a high standard of professional training, and its holders are eligible to sit international medical licencing examinations in the UK,² US,³ and other advanced healthcare systems, or remain in Ukraine to begin clinical practice and primary specialisation.¹

DISRUPTION

In keeping with that in most other countries, medical education in Ukraine was deeply disrupted by COVID-19. For substantial portions of 2020 and 2021, direct patient contact and bedside clinical teaching was suspended, student instruction was delivered virtually, and summative assessments were largely conducted online.⁴ The harmful impacts of these disruptions to knowledge acquisition, skills attainment, and professionalism development across all stages of training are widespread, enduring, and detrimental to student preparedness for transition to clinical practice.⁵⁻⁷ Now, for many medical students training in Ukraine, these effects are being both repeated and compounded by the ongoing war. Since the start of Russia's invasion, Ukrainian medical education has been once again transitioned to delivery online, while clinical encounters and formal assessments have been largely suspended or cancelled entirely. As such,



many international medical students have returned to their home countries,⁸ while those about to complete their sixth year of training, including Mariia, the second author of this article, will receive their diplomas and enter clinical practice having been denied the experiential learning opportunities central to medical training, including those usually obtained through protracted clinical placements in family practice. There is enormous need for additional doctors, especially those practising as family doctors in primary care, meaning the next cohort of medical graduates in Ukraine will be eagerly welcomed despite the impacts of both the recent pandemic and ongoing war on their medical education.

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This article (with references) was first posted on *BJGP Life* on 27 June 2022; <https://bjgp.life.com/meded>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp22X720329>

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