

ENHANCING HEALTHCARE ACCESSIBILITY FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES IN LITHUANIA: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN HEALTH PASSPORT AND WHOQOL-BREF

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Abstract. This paper examines the healthcare challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania due to the ongoing war initiated by Russia against Ukraine, which began in 2014 and escalated significantly in 2022. It discusses the development and implementation of the "Human Health Passport," an innovative online health monitoring tool, which, combined with the WHOQOL-BREF instrument, assesses the quality of life of refugees, aiming to improve the accessibility and efficacy of healthcare services.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugees, Lithuania, healthcare access, Human Health Passport, WHOQOL-BREF, psychological support, medical integration.

Introduction

Following the outbreak of the war initiated by Russia against Ukraine in 2014 and its escalation in 2022, millions of Ukrainians were compelled to seek refuge abroad. Lithuania became a significant host, facing challenges in integrating these refugees, particularly in terms of healthcare. This study explores the healthcare challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania, including access to services, psychological barriers, and integration into Lithuanian healthcare systems.

Materials and methods: this study employs a qualitative analysis of healthcare access and psychological support systems available to Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania.

Results and discussion. Lithuania, in welcoming refugees, faces the need not only to provide basic necessities such as housing and food but also to create conditions for their physical and psychological recovery. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes medical assistance, psychological support, and social integration.

On the other hand, refugees encounter various health-related issues that can significantly complicate their adaptation and integration into new societies. Among the main challenges are:

- 1) limited access to medical services;
- 2) psychological issues;
- 3) chronic diseases;
- 4) lack of medical insurance;
- 5) access to specialized medical services;
- 6) social and cultural barriers.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including providing informational support, ensuring access to medical services, creating psychological support programs, and enhancing medical staff's awareness of refugees' specific needs.

To address some of these issues, the "Human Health Passport" was introduced. It is an online health monitoring method that allows individuals to monitor their health and



work capacity, detect potential problems at an early stage, and take preventive measures. The "Human Health Passport" is a vital tool for detecting changes in health status and facilitating access to medical services.

In 2020, scientists Dr.(HP) Polyakov and Dr.Tomarevska introduced the "Human Health Passport" [1]. This tool combines scientific innovations from the Institute of Gerontology (Ukraine) and recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO).

The Human Health Passport helps to control one's health through regular monitoring, allowing timely detection and resolution of problems, minimizing waiting times, and optimizing the use of medical resources.

The functional scale is part of the online monitoring survey "Human Health Passport," which helps to assess when individuals may need medical or social support based on their responses.

The success of this tool led us to the idea of adapting it for the Lithuanian population. The Lithuanian version, "Žmogaus sveikatos pasas," was introduced at the Life Sciences Center of Vilnius University in September 2022.

As the number of Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania increased, we realized the need to create a version of the " Human Health Passport" adapted for this group. Ukrainian refugees face numerous challenges, particularly in terms of healthcare. Therefore, we decided that this tool could be vitally important for monitoring their health and detecting potential problems at an early stage.

However, we understood that for a complete picture, it was necessary to consider not only physical health but also the quality of life of refugees. Therefore, we added a quality of life survey to our tool.

The abbreviated quality of life questionnaire is an assessment tool developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) [2]. It is designed to assess the quality of life in various contexts, including medical research, clinical practice, and public health programs. It helps identify how various factors affect a person's quality of life.

The abbreviated quality of life questionnaire consists of 26 questions covering four main domains of quality of life:

- 1) physical health;
- 2) psychological health;
- 3) social relationships;
- 4) environment.

The abbreviated quality of life questionnaire is a universal tool that can be used to assess the quality of life of both healthy individuals and patients with various diseases. It is widely used in clinical research to monitor the effectiveness of treatment and in public health programs.

Advantages of combining the "Human Health Passport" with the WHOQOL-BREF:

- The "Human Health Passport" provides regular monitoring of physical health, detection of changes in health, and early diagnosis of potential problems. WHOQOL-BREF adds an assessment of quality of life, covering physical, psychological, social, and environmental aspects.



- Combining these tools allows for the detection of problems at early stages and the taking of preventive measures, reducing the burden on the healthcare system and costs of treatment. Early diagnosis with the "Human Health Passport" helps prevent serious complications and improves overall health.
- WHOQOL-BREF allows for the assessment of the impact of various factors on the quality of life of refugees, facilitating the development of effective support strategies and enhancing their well-being. Quality of life assessment helps identify problem areas and make informed decisions to improve living conditions.
- Using the "Human Health Passport" increases refugees' awareness of their health status and encourages them to actively self-monitor. WHOQOL-BREF helps refugees understand how various aspects of their lives affect their overall well-being, stimulating active health management.
- Regular health monitoring and quality of life assessment promote better adaptation of refugees to new living conditions and their successful integration into society.

Conclusions. Combining the "Human Health Passport" with WHOQOL-BREF provides a comprehensive approach to assessing and supporting the health of Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania. It allows for effective monitoring of physical health and quality of life, detecting and resolving problems at early stages, promoting disease prevention, and improving overall well-being. Using these tools helps refugees better adapt to new living conditions and facilitates their integration into society.



Prospects for further research. The study of healthcare provision for Ukrainian refugees in Lithuania has opened several avenues for further research. These areas not only promise to deepen our understanding of refugee healthcare needs but also to improve the integration processes in host countries. The following prospects are identified for future research:

- investigating long-term health outcomes of Ukrainian refugees using tools like the Human Health Passport would provide valuable insights into the chronic health issues and the efficacy of continuous health monitoring systems.
- conducting comparative studies between different host countries can reveal best practices and areas needing improvement.

References

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