

PILOTING ADVANCED NURSE ROLE AT PHC IN UKRAINE

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2018 Health Care Reform in Ukraine provided major adjustments that cleared the way for novel advances in the area of human resources for health (HRH).
- In the times of scarce resources and increased demand for healthcare services nursing profession has continued to adapt to meet local needs.
- An integral part of this progress is the implementation of an advanced nurse role aimed at enhancing patient outcomes and improving the overall patient experience while ensuring efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- As a result of piloting advanced nurse role at PHC in Ukraine, since 2021, the career prospects, knowledge, skills and competences of PHC nurses have been steadily expanding.
- Through immersive training and collaborative learning initiatives with GPs within the framework of the Ukrainian-Swiss project 'Medical Education Development' nurses have evolved into active partners rather than assistants in delivering PHC services.
- This transformative shift positions nurses at the forefront of the healthcare landscape, making invaluable contributions to the improvement of health services for all.

WHY REVISING ROLE OF NURSES?

The achievements in HRH were made possible by the health care reform of 2018, which caused drastic changes in the healthcare system. The PHC's approach to the relationship between the patient, the doctor, and the state has evolved. With the introduction of the reform, the budgetary upkeep of medical facilities was replaced with the purchase of medical services. Now, the money is being used to support patients' funds rather than the network of hospitals. As a result, we had the chance to incorporate quality adjustments that result in a more effective use of the resources at hand.

European countries introduced advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) to improve the accessibility and efficiency of health care services by strengthening the role of the nurse. Thus, ANP is seen as an important role for better access, continuity, and integration of care, better management of chronic conditions.

UKRAINIAN-SWISS PROJECT "MEDICAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT"

Duration of the first phase:
December 2018 – June 2023

Implemented:
Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH)

Financed:
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Goal of the Project:
To provide quality care to the Ukrainian population by improving the medical education system for the primary healthcare workforce.

ADVANC NURSE ROLE AT PHC IN UKRAINE"

Start of implementation:
spring 2021

Target group:
physicians, nurses, and PHC managers

Key implementing partner:
Ukrainian Healthcare Centre

The new role should imply responsibilities, skills, attitudes, and knowledge which should lead to advanced practice nursing.

Therefore, Medical Education Development (MED) project had special attention to the role of nurses in PHC within the 'advancing PHC nurse role pilot'. Prior to this idea implementation, MED project analysed the EU experience in ANP. In details, this analyses is available now in the format of policy brief '[The role of nurses in primary health care provision: modern models](#)'. In this document, we explored the potential for introducing advanced roles in PHC in Ukraine. It revealed that to understand, implement, and practice advanced roles of nurses in Ukrainian PHC, it is essential to pilot advanced role approach and generate the evidence.

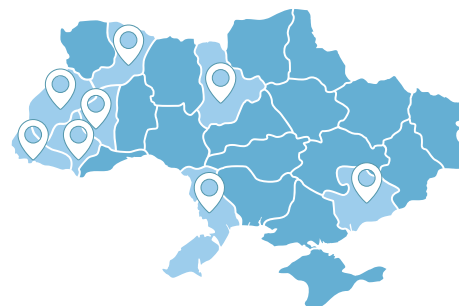
HOW IT STARTED

The pilot project "Advancing nurse role at PHC in Ukraine" has been implemented since March 2021. The aim of the project is to improve the accessibility of services for patients and the efficiency of the use of health care resources by strengthening the role of the nurses. Namely, the introduction of a separate (family doctor/family nurse) appointments at PHC facilities, and by improving nurses' clinical and communication skills. Detailed

results of the pilot can be found in [the report](#).



The pilot project was implemented in partnership with 8 PHC facilities chosen through a competitive application and interview process. Since April 2021, eight public PHC locations in **Kyiv, Rivne, Chortkiv, Kolomyia, Mukachevo, Melitopol***, and **Odesa**, as well as one private PHC facility in **Lviv**, have served as piloting sites.



Healthcare needs of Ukrainian population require revision of roles of health care professionals in primary level of health care provision.



Pavlo Kovtonyuk,
Deputy Minister of
Health (2016-2019)

**Due to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the temporary occupation of Zaporizhzhia Oblast, the primary healthcare facility in Melitopol was forced to suspend its participation in the pilot project in February 2022.*

PILOT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The significance of nurses' contributions is frequently undervalued both by their peers and the patients they care for. Nurses often faced a lack of trust in their abilities to conduct independent patient examinations, offer diagnoses, provide counseling, and more. Hospital management invested little in nursing training and professional development.

May-June 2021

Baseline data was gathered from the pilot sites. These included the number of patient appointments, average patient waiting time, the operational model of the call center/reception, and the baseline survey of nurses. Such comprehensive data ensured the ability to track further changes in clinical practice.



The usual perception of an 'ordinary nurse' failed to resonate with me. For far too long, nurses have been overshadowed by doctors and downgraded to paperwork or limited tasks like ECG, vaccinations, and pediatric procedures. I believe it's time to redefine the role of a nurse as a «universal soldier» – a valued and integral member of the healthcare team. No longer just an assistant, a nurse possesses the potential to actively participate in the multi-stage process of service provision within a collaborative team practice. After all, the patient's life and well-being often depends on the nurse's skills, timely response, and collaboration with the doctor.

Oksana Farynych,
Mukachevo

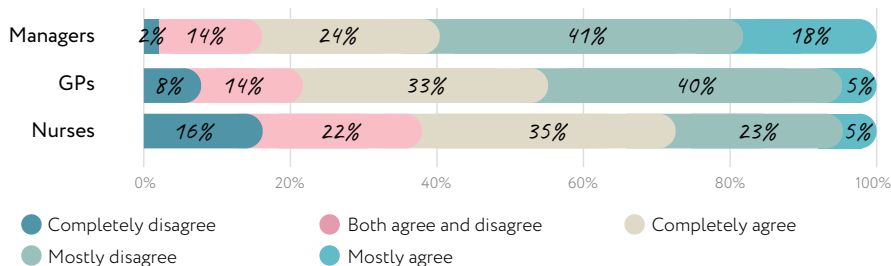
Oct. 2020-Apr. 2021

A study called '**Role and responsibilities of nurses at PHC in Ukraine**' was carried out. Results of this study (available in Ukrainian only) demonstrate that nurses' potential in providing medical service is underutilized at PHC level.

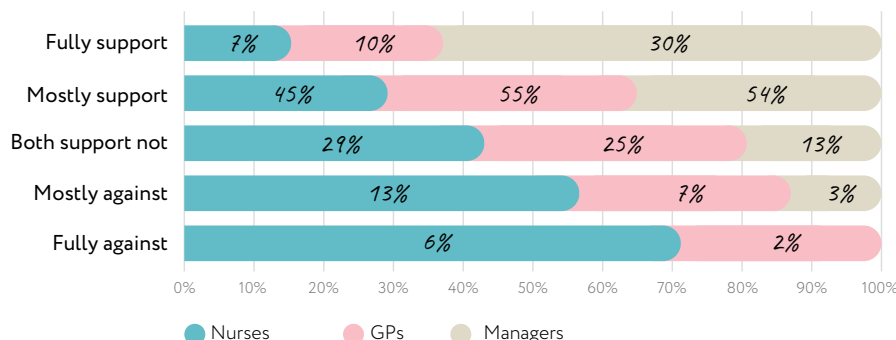
It also highlights the readiness of PHC managers, GPs and nurses to extend the nurses' role.



TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: PHC DOCTORS SPEND A LOT OF TIME DOING TASKS THAT COULD BE DELEGATED TO NURSING STAFF? (N=632)



OVERALL, WHAT IS YOUR OPINION ABOUT EXPANDING THE ROLE OF NURSES AND CHANGING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES? (N=632)



June 2021

The MED project, in collaboration with its partners, conducted a **Nurses Forum** in Kyiv. The event aimed to identify and highlight nursing community leaders, as well as to foster networking and facilitate the emergence of a dynamic and forward-thinking group of leaders committed to driving positive change in the nursing profession.



It's very nice to see that nurses' voices are beginning to be heard. This forum served as an inspiring and unifying platform, fostering a stimulating environment that nurtures teamwork within nursing. The growing number of individuals eager to challenge the rotten system and elevate the quality of the nursing process is remarkable. I believe that together we can make a significant difference for the better.

Natalia Ruzhylo,
Ivano-Frankivsk

Oct. 2021-Jan. 2022

Online trainings were conducted for the management teams of the pilot facilities, physicians, and nurses. These trainings included HR and communication issues, as well as professional development goals of the implementing teams.

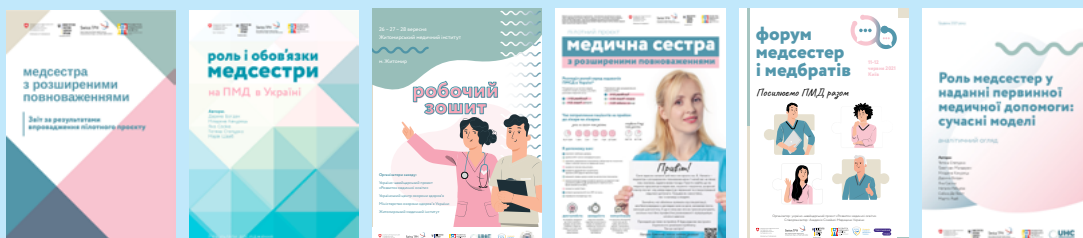


Currently, we are dedicated to enhancing our communication efforts. Call center plays a vital role in establishing individual nurse appointments. Understanding precisely what needs to be conveyed to our clients is crucial. Call centre staff must have a comprehensive grasp of the advantages clients can gain from nurse appointments, the range of services nurses can provide, and the most compelling message to motivate clients to opt for these appointments.

Kateryna Gurienko,
Odesa

MATERIALS

To support pilot project activities as well as to document findings and evidence a series of analytical notes was published. Additionally, materials including notebooks, informational booklets and posters were developed to ensure the best educational experience and effective communication of ANP role to patients.



Sep. 2021, Oct. 2022

Two **Intensive Courses for Nurses and PHC teams** were held. During these events, nurses and doctors attended master classes on BLS, heart and lungs auscultation, ECG, pre-medical examination, motivational counseling, cancer screening, as well as worked on trust and teamwork.



Thanks to the project, I became braver, more confident, and can take responsibility for my work. A nurse is not a doctor's secretary. I can work both in a team with a doctor and independently. I especially like to communicate with patients and advise them. Patients began to trust me more, more often turn to me without disturbing the doctor. And I am happy to listen and help to solve their problems.

Iryna Rysych,
Chortkiv

July-August 2021

The pilot project team, together with the implementation teams in the pilot facilities, developed, discussed and approved models of **separate reception by a doctor and a nurse for each facility**. Implementation strategies included:

- trainings on communication and clinical skills for PHC teams
- workshops for management teams on HRH (development, retention, motivation, CPD, etc.)
- development of new algorithms for PHC call centres regarding newly introduced nurse role
- communication of the advanced nurse role to the patients.



The project has shown how important a nurse is. How much we underestimate the capabilities of a family nurse. After the training, the colleagues are motivated, and thirst for knowledge.

Myroslava Chubirko,
Mukachevo

November 2021

Teams of pilot facilities were invited to one of the sessions of the **"MED marathon"**. During the activity, we talked about



improving the availability of services for patients by increasing the efficiency of using the health care system resources with strengthening the role of the nurse.

In Ukraine, nurses are frequently more ambitious, seeking more engaging roles beyond just paper work.

Nurses empowerment proves to be invaluable to the entire PHC team, unlocking greater efficiency in their collective efforts. We have to bear in mind that the primary beneficiary of services is the patient. For them, increased involvement of nurses in the medical process translates to enhanced accessibility to medical services, ensuring a more patient-centered and comprehensive healthcare experience.



Matviy Khrenov,
Ukrainian
Healthcare Centre

June-September 2022

Both nurses and doctors participated in a sequence of **training sessions focused on delivering medical care during wartime**. These sessions included online meetings for remote patient counseling, providing healthcare services under stress, and a specialized course in tactical medicine tailored for civilians.



The project has become a 'safe' place for me, where I find balance, draw energy, faith in myself, where I want to come again and again to be filled with positive energy and inspiration. Even despite the war, the aggressor who wants to intimidate, deprive of hope, the desire to move forward, I want to continue to develop in this project. I believe in myself, my colleagues, the future of my country.

Tetiana Horuk,
Rivne

December 2022

A **study tour to Croatia** was organized for PHC teams from pilot sites to explore the role distribution in Croatian PHC teams, to analyse the cooperation of nurses and GP's in PHC facilities. We got insights on the approaches used in service quality assurance, planning and delivering CPD for nurses and doctors.

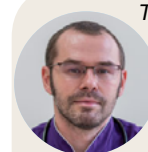


The knowledge about the organization of medical care in Croatia gave us an idea where we are moving to. I personally cannot make systemic changes, but I can change my work at my level: place a nurse in a separate office, teach or tell what exactly depends on her, share the experience gained in study tour with other GPs on peer groups, etc. I can become a drop in the ocean, which will change the country.

Kateryna Pochtar,
Rivne

January-April 2023

Nurses and doctors from pilot sites attended a series of **trainings on clinical skills** including otoscopy, ECG, helping patients in grief, mental health, etc.



Today, a nurse is able not only to do the paper and computer work, but also to develop professionally, independently conduct pre-medical examination of the patient, issue certificates, write prescriptions and participate in early detection of disorders in child development. Within a year, thanks to the changes, nurses began not only to work independently and qualitatively without a doctor, but also to grow professionally, and our PHC centre – to provide a greater number of medical services.

Ihor Savchak,
Lviv

WHERE WE ARE NOW

A total of **30 educational events** were conducted, aimed at enhancing the clinical and communication competencies of **413 nurses and other professionals** within the PHC teams.

Additionally, over **1000 patients** benefit from individual nurse appointments on a monthly basis.

About **20%** of nurses in each pilot facility were involved in the project activities and improved their clinical and communication skills and self-confidence as a valuable member of the PHC team.

About **15%** of the working time of nurses with advanced roles is now allocated to individual nursing appointments, which leads to:

- Reduction in patient queues and time spent in the primary care facility.
- Increase in the number of patient visits in most pilot facilities.
- Increased level of trust in nurses in primary health care teams.

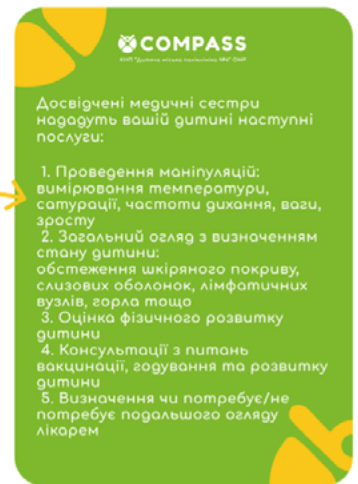
According to an annual survey, the primary health care center in Mukachevo reports that patients' trust in nurses is higher than in doctors, at 70% (compared to 45% for doctors), and that nurses have become more accessible, according to patients.

Nurses perform independent patient appointments at all pilot facilities, where they conduct:

- pre-medical examination,
- glucometry,
- pulse oximetry,
- measurement of body temperature and blood pressure,
- anthropometry and determination of body mass index,
- assessment of visual acuity,



- ECG and its preliminary analysis,
- Ruffier test,
- vaccination,
- counseling on nutrition and healthy lifestyle,



- motivational counseling on smoking cessation,
- counseling to reduce the risk of complications from diabetes, arterial hypertension, bronchial asthma, etc.

CASES OF OUR NURSES

CLINICAL SKILLS



During the visit to our PHC centre, a 45-year-old working woman requested a referral for radiography. While talking to her, I noted that she had complaints of general weakness and dizziness. The patient attributed these symptoms to 'hormonal changes in the body'. Previously she was diagnosed with hypertension. Excessive weight and thirst alerted me and I suggested to conduct measurement of glucose and cholesterol level in the blood immediately. The test revealed an elevated glucose level. I helped women to schedule an appointment with the GP and provided recommendations on nutrition and further examination. After a visit to the family doctor and additional examinations with an endocrinologist, the patient was diagnosed with diabetes type II, and appropriate treatment was prescribed. After some time, the patient came for a follow-up examination, already feeling good and was sincerely grateful for my vigilance and professionalism. I'm pleased.

Alla Ratushna,
Kyiv



A woman asked for assistance for her elderly mother who had been apathetic for a long time. Having talked to the patient and asked everything in detail, I saw the signs of anxiety, depression, nervousness, lack of faith in the future, and unwillingness to live. The patient did not want to go to a professional psychologist because she considered it to be a waste of time. However, she had trust in doctors and nurses as she was periodically invited for check-ups, diagnostic examinations, and conversations about maintaining health in her age. So during several appointments I didn't only measure her blood pressure and told about a healthy lifestyle, but also allowed the patient to speak out, asked her about her hobbies, what she used to like and encouraged her to continue doing the things she liked. As a result, the elderly woman gradually came out of the state of apathy and was smiling to her relatives and close people again.

Larysa Romanovska,
Rivne



A mother with a two-year-old child had an individual appointment with me for a preventive examination of a healthy child. The mother was a convinced antivaxxer who categorically refused to get her child immunized and no doctor's arguments about diseases and complications which vaccines protect from did not make any impression on her. As the experienced pediatrician with years of experience had no more arguments to convince her, she arranged an individual appointment with me for examination and taking anthropometric measurements, as well as a conversation about the importance of immunization. During the appointment I took all necessary measurements, weighed a child, asked the mother about her view on what was good for her child. I learned that the mother was, for some reason, sure that healthcare employees do not get their children immunized and fake the records about immunization because vaccines cause irreparable damage to health and lead to disability.

To start, I told her my personal story about my four-year-old child and how I care about her health, get her immunized, have preventive examinations, and follow the principles of healthy nutrition. In this way I managed to build trust not only as a healthcare professional but as a mother with mother and she agreed to have the first immunization. Today this approach to communication between nurses and mothers, which doctors do not always use in practice, brings results with regards to gradual increase in the child vaccination rates. This suggests that communication with a nurse may bring the best results for patients.

Tetiana Halelo,
Rivne

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