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DEVELOPING YOUTH LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD: THE ROLE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND THE ERASMUS+ SEAL-NR PROJECT

One of the key priorities of Ukraine's post-war recovery is not only the restoration of healthcare infrastructure but also the preparation of a new generation of healthcare professionals capable of working effectively amid uncertainty, resource constraints, and profound systemic change. Medical education plays a pivotal role in this process, as future physicians must be equipped not only to provide high-quality clinical care but also to make evidence-based decisions, communicate effectively with patients, collaborate within multidisciplinary teams, and contribute to the transformation of the healthcare system [1, 2]. Accordingly, fostering leadership potential among medical students should be regarded as an integral component of contemporary medical education.

Traditional medical education, which focuses predominantly on theoretical knowledge and clinical skills, should be complemented by competencies essential for effective professional collaboration and leadership [3]. These competencies include critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, conflict management, decision-making, organizational skills, and the ability to lead and manage change [4]. Available evidence indicates that leadership training can be effectively integrated into medical education curricula and should be introduced at an early stage of professional development [5].

Interactive educational approaches offer valuable opportunities to develop these competencies. Problem-based learning, simulation-based education, clinical case discussions, small-group learning, interprofessional education, and project-based learning enable students to develop autonomy, collaborative decision-making, communication skills, and team leadership [6, 7]. Simulation scenarios that replicate complex clinical situations are particularly valuable, as they enable future physicians to practice leadership, delegation, prioritization, and team coordination within a safe learning environment.

Leadership development in medical education should also extend beyond purely professional skills to encompass an understanding of healthcare systems and the capacity

to initiate and manage organizational change. Recent evidence highlights the importance of structured leadership competency frameworks encompassing communication, teamwork, systems thinking, self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and change management [8, 9]. These competencies are particularly relevant for early-career healthcare professionals who will contribute to the reconstruction and transformation of Ukraine's healthcare system.

International academic collaboration can further strengthen these processes. Participation in international educational projects provides students and early-career academic staff with opportunities to exchange knowledge, develop intercultural communication skills, collaborate with peers from diverse educational settings, and gain exposure to innovative approaches to medical education. In this context, the ERASMUS+ SEAL-NR project may serve as an important educational platform for strengthening student engagement, collaborative learning, professional communication, and leadership development.

For Ukraine, leadership-oriented medical education is particularly important in the context of post-war recovery and healthcare system transformation. Young physicians will increasingly be expected to serve not only as healthcare providers but also as members and leaders of multidisciplinary teams, coordinators of patient-centred care, contributors to quality-improvement initiatives, and agents of innovation. Accordingly, medical universities should foster educational environments in which students can develop leadership competencies through practical experience, teamwork, reflective practice, international collaboration, and participation in academic and community-based projects.

Conclusions. Developing youth leadership potential should be regarded as an important component of post-war healthcare recovery in Ukraine. Contemporary medical education should combine clinical training with the development of communication, teamwork, decision-making, organizational, and leadership competencies. The ERASMUS+ SEAL-NR project offers a promising platform for strengthening international collaboration and supporting the professional and leadership development of medical students and early-career healthcare professionals. Investing in leadership-oriented medical education can contribute to developing a new generation of healthcare professionals capable of advancing innovation, resilience, and sustainable transformation of Ukraine's healthcare system.

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