



OUR SUPPORT TO THE MUMS AND BABIES IN UKRAINE

DECEMBER 2022

Why are innocent mums and babies victims of this war?

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, I became concerned about the status of maternity care in Ukraine. I was surprised that this was an area not in the list of priorities for any humanitarian agencies.

We established connections with specialists in Ukraine who shared data with us which confirmed that the war was having a wide-ranging detrimental effect on antenatal and maternity care.

One stark figure was that 2.6% of new-borns suffered oxygen deprivation (birth asphyxia) in the first few critical moments of their lives. This has the potential of causing long term physical or mental disability.

We do not know how many will show permanent after effects but this is a very high ratio in comparison to 0.8% in other countries.

As the war conditions continue to deteriorate, we can only guess that the number of new-borns with birth asphyxia and other complications may be higher.

We have now agreed a protocol for an ambitious programme in 37 hospitals in Ukraine to help create a safe environment for pregnant women to give birth and for the new borns to have the best chance of survival.

Our aim is to significantly reduce the number of babies suffering oxygen deprivation and other complications.

The Programme has been approved by the Ministry of Health, Ukraine. I would value your support.

Dr John Philip, Chair IRFHP,
jp_rotary@btinternet.com
+44 7889 3880388

www.rotaryhealthprofessionals.org

The first breath of a baby

THE FIRST BREATH of a new-born infant, within moments of birth, is magical - it triggers in its delicate body, physiological changes enabling it to be independent of the mother. Almost always for those witnessing this amazing moment there would be mixed emotions – mostly cries of joy.

But those moments can appear long. Each tick of the clock when the baby does not spontaneously breath, raises concern for those around – especially the attending medics.

They know that if the baby's first breath is delayed, the consequences could be so serious.

The clinicians prepare for this moment from the first time they meet a pregnant woman. They do their best to help the baby remain healthy in the womb, which is dependent on many factors including the mother's mental and physical well-being.

When the baby arrives, under normal circumstances, everything is in place to assist the transition from a dependant to a relatively independent human being.

Sometimes circumstances surrounding the pregnancy as well as the moments of delivery make that transition challenging.

Pregnancy in war conditions is less than ideal for the development of healthy babies in the womb.

We believe that mums and babies should not be victims of this war.

We call on Rotarians and others for support

The Fellowship coordinates medical aid to Ukraine from Rotary in Great Britain and Ireland and beyond. We do so in a selective manner, ensuring that our aid is focused, meets priority needs and achieves value for money.

My journey to the Ukraine/Polish Border



LAST WEEK I travelled 1350 miles, from my home in Newbury across the channel, through France, Germany and Poland to the Ukrainian border town of Tomaszow Lubelski to hand over 120 boxes of vital medical equipment to colleagues from Ukraine.

The boxes were packed tight into two vans driven by two Scottish colleagues - my role was mainly navigating.

The reason I felt compelled to make this journey was because the medical equipment was purchased by donations from Rotarians and well wishers in the UK (we also received some donations from Rotary in Australia and a company in Wales), and I felt that I could not simply rely on someone else to take responsibility for this.

It was also important to get these boxes to hospitals in Ukraine with speed and before the onset of winter.

Many of you have been generous in supporting our medical aid to Ukraine which includes supplying 20,000 tourniquets, medications and £120,000 worth orthopaedic instruments as well as many other items.

The total cash value of our donations so far is in excess of £363,000. It is difficult to put a value on the many other medical support and donations to Ukraine from other organisations we have facilitated.

What we have achieved so far can only be described as Rotary magic.

As the war has continued and intensified the medical needs of the people of Ukraine have become increasingly complex.

Thank you for your support.



The total cash value of our donations is in excess of £363,000. It is difficult to put a value on the many other medical support and donations to Ukraine from other organisations we have facilitated.



The key part of this 'mums and babies' programme is enabling women in labour to monitor babies' heart beats using hand held, battery operated scanners. The women when involved in monitoring the welfare of their own babies are remarkably astute in detecting potential danger signs, which is helped by a pictorial chart.

Designed to reduce maternal and neonatal complications

We hope to evaluate the impact of our intervention as soon as practical and with the help of Rotary in Ukraine expand the programme to other hospitals with any necessary modifications.

With the help of the Association of Neonatologists and Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, in Ukraine, and the Canadian Neonatal Foundation and a UK charity, Maternal and Child Health Advocacy International (MCAI), we have agreed a protocol for an ambitious one-year programme in 37 hospitals in Ukraine to help create a safe environment for pregnant women to give birth and for the new borns to have the best chance of survival.



This baby carrier, designed by Leardal, is proven to provide warmth for low weight babies and save lives. Leardal has given permission for us to use the design and manufacture them in large numbers so that we could supply them to the mums in Ukraine. If you feel able to help us make this happen please contact me.

THIS PROGRAMME IS DESIGNED to reduce maternal and neonatal complications.

The key part of the programme is enabling women in labour to monitor babies' heart beats using hand held, battery operated scanners. The women when involved in monitoring the welfare of their babies are remarkably astute in detecting potential danger signs, which would be helped by a pictorial chart.

When intervention is indicated the specialists are alerted at an early stage. If medical intervention is indicated the specialists may require devices to assist the delivery with special devices which we have supplied to each hospital tailored to their expected throughput.

We have also provided medications to reduce the risk of haemorrhage, and testing devices to monitor the adequacy of oxygenation of the babies.

The mums may also be provided with wraps to encourage body to body contacts to maintain the new-borns' body temperature - a critical factor in the first few minutes of the babies' lives.

The wellbeing of a baby depends on many maternal and medical factors prior to the commencement of labour. Much of this is outside our control. The war conditions including internal migration are continuing to place challenges to women who become pregnant - a factor which in itself may have long term adverse effects.

Some Ukrainian doctors have suggested that they are seeing more premature and under-weight babies although we have not been able to prove this.

The health sector in Ukraine is remarkably resilient. However, it is being placed under pressure due to the large number of people who are injured, fear of attacks on medical facilities, shortage of supplies, internal migration as well as external migration of professionals.

Recent attacks on power supply and other provision such as water supply have added further danger.

Whilst all patients in need of medical care (heart patients, cancer, mental health) are victims of the war, mums and the new born deserve special and urgent help.

**IF YOU ARE A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL, PLEASE JOIN US.
TOGETHER, WE COULD HELP MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE.**

Dr John Philip (UK), Chair, IRFHP

jp_rotary@btinternet.com