

The State of Dental health in Ukraine

by

Dr. Mark Hong DDS, FAGD
Chief Medical Officer
For Andesite Blue LTD
www.andesiteblue.co.uk
www.linkedin.com/in/mark-hong-069168ab

mark.hong@andesiteblue.co.uk

UK +44 121 295 8870

UA +380 93 453 7790

Andesite Blue LTD, 3rd Floor, 86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE



Well, this topic is a little difficult to discuss, as the country's level of dental care differs vastly from the capital city of Kyiv versus anywhere outside of Kyiv. For the most part, the capital city of Kyiv is modern, very European in certain parts, and dare I say, reminiscent of New York city in the 80's and the 90's for all its grit and character.



Ukraine gained its independence from the USSR in 1991, like many of its sister countries who also gained independence at the same time from the grips of communism, and since then, the country has seen its ups and downs.



But we are not here to discuss history or politics, but we are here to discuss the need for improvements.

Few statistics. The average dentist salary in Ukraine overall is about 27,500 UAH a month, and at today's exchange rate, it is about \$1009 a month or \$12,120 a year, or just about 10,000 GBP. Compare that to an average salary of a US dentist at \$143,000 a year, we are looking at a paltry sum.

Take that with the average salary in Ukraine of about 23,000 UAH according to some sources in Kyiv, and about 10,000 UAH outside of Kyiv, being a dentist is not a lucrative proposition for most. Along with the cost of dental school being the highest among all professional schools, it makes sense why a smart Ukrainian would not attempt to become a dentist here. As a comparison, the highest salaried profession, engineers, make an average of \$113,000 a year, according to www.emolument.com.

So, let's get back to the state of dentistry here in Ukraine. The salary of the dental professional is not the problem here, but a result of the problem. The problem is that they lack care. The cost is relatively high for dental care, as there is nothing they can do about the cost of the material, and because of that, the general population tends to neglect to

receive dental care. Unlike many parts of the body, a tooth does not heal itself. A broken bone will mend over time, but tooth decay does not heal over time but gets worse. What could have been fixed by a small filling gets too big to treat, and more costly procedures are needed, such as crowns, or even implants. The prevention in dentistry indeed is a penny to a pound of treatment.



So, what really is the problem in Ukraine? The lack of access to care. There are approximately 19,000 dentists registered in all of Ukraine. The number of dentists is not regulated in the country and can fluctuate greatly. That number to a population of 44 million in Ukraine, the ratio is under 4 dentists per 10,000. Compared that to US which has a ratio of 61 dentists per 10,000, and highest in Greece of 127 per 10,000, according to www.who.int

This problem is further exacerbated in the rural region, where dental care is administered in outdated inadequate clinics that cannot provide but the simplest of treatments of sterilized instruments.

So, yes, the dental care in Ukraine is not up to western standards. Yes, there are clinics touting themselves as having European standards, but they are geared towards foreigners coming to receive seemingly discounted treatment, not to the public. There will always be posh practices for the uber rich or westerners coming to receive discounted, to them anyways, treatment.

Happiness index, according to www.globaleconomy.com, is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. They are ranked from 0-10 in many categories, and Ukraine ranks 123 out of 189 countries surveyed. The number is 4.51 in 2020, as an example, average is a 5. Top on the happiness index chart is access to wealth, and the second topic on the happiness index is access to good healthcare with good outcomes. If a country cannot provide access to good healthcare, the populace will not be happy.

So, where do we go with this information? Well, the access to dentistry must improve. There must be more dental offices, as well as more dental professionals, qualified, properly educated, are needed. The access must be improved. The number of available dentists willing to treat patients in Ukraine must increase.

This is the vision, more access to qualified dental care. Preventative dentistry must be on the forefront of dental care in this country, not fixed after the inevitable deterioration beyond repair. Routine dentistry can be performed affordably to the masses, that will increase the visits to the clinics, which will also increase revenue to the clinics and the dentists. More revenue will attract more qualified young individuals to want to become dentists. This will ignite the profession to become what it needs to provide “happiness” to the populace.

