



Trauma surgeon returns to Ukraine to support front-line physicians

Volunteering through the Global Surgical and Medical Support Group (GSMSG), University of Miami Miller School of Medicine professor Enrique Ginzburg, M.D., met with Ukrainian physicians and delivered much-needed medical equipment to a military hospital in Lviv.

The missiles struck on the outskirts of Lviv, miles away from the hospital where Dr. Ginzburg, a Miller School professor and trauma surgeon, was volunteering, but still close enough that he felt the ground tremble.



Dr. Enrique Ginzburg (second from right) traveled to Ukraine as a volunteer physician for the second time with the nonprofit Global



Surgical and Medical Support Group.

The powerful blasts were a stark reminder that war still rages in Ukraine – for 147 days and counting. That’s how long it has been since Russian forces invaded the Eastern European nation, displacing millions of people.

Out of a sense of duty and compassion, Dr. Ginzburg had traveled to the war-torn country in early July for the second time in three months, determined to support front-line Ukrainian surgeons who are caring for and healing the worst of the wounded.

And he did just that, delivering much-needed interventional radiologic equipment to the military hospital in Lviv, observing surgical procedures at the facility, and presenting a group of Ukrainian physicians with certificates that made them honorary members of the Panamerican Trauma Society.

A More Challenging Second Mission

Like his first visit to Ukraine in April, Dr. Ginzburg again traveled to Ukraine as a volunteer physician with GSMSG, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit of surgeons and other health care providers who train doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel working in high-threat conflict areas around the world.

But unlike that first trip, Dr. Ginzburg’s second stint in Ukraine proved more challenging. As the trauma medical director and chief of surgery at Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson South Medical Center, he typically endures long hours and grueling medical procedures. “Being on call back in Miami, trying to arrange everything for the trip, and then



experiencing the 36 hours it took to get there took a toll. And I got dehydrated,” he said.

Exhaustion began to set in just as he was about to cross the Polish border into Ukraine, making him wonder if he would be able to complete the tasks he planned to accomplish during his seven-day trip.

Once at his hotel, matters worsened. He passed out while taking a shower, hitting his head against a wall, and ended up becoming an outpatient at the Lviv hospital where he worked with physicians during his first trip back in April.

Life-Saving Procedures

He suffered no serious injuries, an examination revealed, and was able to resume his medical mission with GSMSG. Aaron Epstein, M.D., the Buffalo, New York, surgeon who founded the organization, and his father, interventional radiologist and GSMSG officer David Epstein, M.D., accompanied Dr. Ginzburg on this deployment. John Holcomb, M.D., a retired Army colonel who is now a trauma surgeon at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, also traveled with the group to Ukraine.

At the military hospital in Lviv, Dr. Ginzburg observed trauma surgeons as they performed medical procedures that have saved the lives of scores of Ukrainian soldiers. The injuries were horrific. “Severe extremity injuries with arms and legs having been blown apart and which require external fixators to reconstruct them – that’s what we saw a lot of,” Dr. Ginzburg recalled.

Ukrainian military forces are suffering heavy losses, with as many as 200 soldiers dying each day, according to an advisor for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.



The medical devices Dr. Ginzburg and other GSMSG personnel delivered will be of tremendous aid, serving as training equipment for Ukrainian physicians at the military hospital. But more is needed, he said.

Seeking Donations Stateside

During meetings with the facility's director and other doctors, Dr. Ginzburg learned of their most critical equipment needs. And now that he is back in the U.S., he is reaching out to several medical device companies for donations.

"We're planning a much tighter collaboration with the military hospital," he acknowledged. He hopes to help establish a telemedicine agreement with the facility and GSMSG doctors, and he wants to bring in more volunteer burn specialists. "That's especially a pressing need – the care of burn patients," Dr. Ginzburg said. "But it's difficult recruiting burn doctors. So, we'll be concentrating some of our efforts in that area."

While in Lviv, which is about 40 miles from the Polish border, Dr. Ginzburg visited some of the western Ukrainian city's historic sites, marveling at the architecture but still cognizant that armed conflict raged on in the country. The city has remained relatively peaceful, in stark contrast to the massive destruction inflicted by Russian forces in other areas.

"You would not know that Lviv is a city in a country at war without these things being present: Ukrainian soldiers walking around in uniform, sandbags piled up to protect churches from Russian artillery attacks, historic monuments wrapped in protective covering, and air raid sirens," he said. "But the



residents in Lviv, for the most part, try to go about their daily lives.”

Content Type Article