DIGITAL EMERGENCY HEALTHCARE SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES LIVING WITH HIV

C.C.E. Jordans1, M. Vasylyev1,2, C. Rokx1

1Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 2Astar medical center, Lviv, Ukraine

BACKGROUND

• Ukraine is one of the European countries that is hardest-hit by HIV
• To stop the HIV epidemic, widespread and well-accessible care for people living with HIV (PLWHIV) is necessary
• The Russian invasion (February 2022) hit PLWHIV hard with HIV care services being abruptly interrupted
• Several professional HIV networks started remote digital counselling platforms for displaced Ukrainians living with HIV
• An overview of digital healthcare seeking behavior can help to adapt these platforms to the needs of PLWHIV

METHODS

• February 28, 2022, we launched the #awarehivUkraine project to raise awareness and support for Ukrainians living with HIV
• The project and website (www.awarehiv.com/Ukraine) were widely distributed
• People could contact HIV physicians directly for help by filling in a digital form
• Demographical data and healthcare information provided were anonymously analyzed
• Main endpoints: evolution of digital healthcare seeking behavior, number of people seeking contact, country where they needed help, and the needs asked for

RESULTS

• Since its start, the website has been visited 1,197 times
• 19% found the website by social media and 15% by search engines
• Until August 9, we were contacted 73 times (range 1-9/week, peak mid/end June) with questions for a total of 82 PLWHIV
• 3 individuals could not be answered due to incorrect or missing contact details
• Most were women (53/82), 23 were men and 6 did not disclose their sex.
• All but 4 contact topics were on antiretroviral therapy related questions (69/73)
• Over half (42) sought contact from Eastern Europe, most from Poland (28/82)
• Germany hosted most people who sought contact from Western Europe (10/82) (Figure 1)
• Over time, a decrease was seen in the number of people contacting from Eastern Europe along with an increase from Western Europe (Table 1)

CONCLUSIONS

• HIV management related digital health consultation comes from across Europe and is mostly on antiretroviral therapy
• This type of healthcare seems feasible within professional HIV networks and can be a useful aid for PLWHIV and HIV care providers wanting to provide emergency HIV care

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Number of people seeking contact</th>
<th>Eastern European country, n (%)</th>
<th>Western European country, n (%)</th>
<th>Other country, n (%)</th>
<th>Unknown country, n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23 (54)</td>
<td>14 (32)</td>
<td>2 (9)</td>
<td>3 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23 (52)</td>
<td>14 (32)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>6 (35)</td>
<td>2 (12)</td>
<td>3 (18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Countries where Ukrainian people living with HIV seek care