

EMS Training Center Dream Becomes a Reality

"The idea to establish an Emergency Medical Service Training Center (EMSTC) came to me in the early 1990s when I became the head of the Department for Disaster Medicine—which provides comprehensive training to the emergency medicine specialists—at the Kiev Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education," says Mikhail Natsyuk, director of the Kiev EMSTC. "At that time, I was always thinking about how we could teach people to use emergency medicine methodologies because I saw the need for this and knew that ambulance teams often encountered problems related to cardiopulmonary resuscitation and transport immobilization, for example, at the pre-hospital stage," he explains, adding, "I knew that EMS techniques could help these physicians and their patients, but we had no way to teach them appropriate skills at that time as we lacked the necessary equipment and materials."

Thus, when AIHA proposed that the Department of Disaster Medicine and Coney Island Hospital in Brooklyn, New York—as part of AIHA's now-graduated Kiev/Coney Island partnership—work together to establish a joint EMSTC, Mikhail Natsyuk was eager to accept the offer. Looking back on the program, Natsyuk says, "Our partnership broadened our opportunities. We got access to the Internet, new information, mannequins, training tools, and state-of-the-art equipment, not to mention the opportunity to meet colleagues from other countries, which opened our minds to new ways of looking at the world. In addition, six of our trainers spent time in the United States, where they gained both theoretical and practical knowledge. So, thanks to AIHA, I was able to make my dream come true."

Over the years, Natsyuk and his trainers have implemented various courses to respond to the specific needs of diverse groups of trainees. As he explains, "For



Dr. Mikhail Natsyuk, director of the Kiev EMSTC, explains an intubation procedure to a group of ambulance physicians from Kiev and Vinnytsia.

ambulance teams, we have introduced a two-week training program that covers all the fundamentals of emergency medicine—from the primary examination to cardiopulmonary resuscitation, intubation, and immobilization in cases of an acute trauma. We also offer a shorter course for non-medical professionals that covers issues of providing emergency treatment in extreme conditions. It is worth noting that we teach all of the topics to each category of trainees in different volumes and skill levels—tailored to meet their needs. We also offer two-day courses on selected topics. For example, not all ambulances are equipped with laryngoscopes, so we teach ambulance teams how to intubate manually."

The success of the Kiev EMSTC provided the impetus for opening a network of similar centers across Ukraine. The Center has trained the instructors at the L'viv and Donetsk EMSTCs, which were also established in cooperation with AIHA. And, in the near future, the Ukrainian Ministry of Health plans to set up similar centers in Simferopol and Uzhgorod, and eventually in other Ukrainian regions, as well.

"Since the very first months of its existence, our Center has been extremely popular among all categories of trainees—from ambulance doctors to non-medical first-responders. The teaching methodology that we use is very accessible and thus there are many people who want to take our courses.

The Kiev EMS Training Center was established in November 1995 at the Kiev Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education, a member of AIHA's Kiev/Coney Island partnership. Designed to train EMS specialists to provide pre-hospital care to those in need, the Center has trained more than 4,350 individuals to date. Apart from medical specialists, the Center also trains policemen, traffic officers, firefighters, rescuers, and other non-medical first-responders. The story of how this Center came into existence and what it offers is on this page; the story of a trainee whose professional life was changed by attending a course at the Center is found on the other side.

Trainee groups are usually formed several months in advance, so it is often difficult to get in," Natsyuk laughs, adding, "Such was the case with Oleg Zinevich. Usually, we send trainee admittance vouchers to the Central Ambulance Station, which distributes them among substations. One day, after our trainee pool was already formed, I was approached by a young physician who was denied a voucher, but desperately wanted to attend the training. I appreciated his persistence and decided to admit him. Not only did he master the EMS methodology, but Oleg also immediately understood the importance teaching others how easily a human life can be saved. I saw that the EMS topic was extremely interesting to him and decided to offer him a job. Oleg is currently a successful trainer at the Center."

"I always tell my trainees that their knowledge of EMS techniques should be so well developed, so automatic, that they are able to save a human life without thinking. That's why we do what we do," emphasizes Mikhail Natsyuk.

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