



My journey as a Ukrainian healthcare professional: a story of resilience and hope

Today, I want to share my story with you because it reflects the experiences of so many Ukrainian healthcare professionals who have faced overwhelming challenges due to the war in Ukraine.


Back home, I had a successful career as a consultant rheumatologist and an associate professor at one of Europe's top universities. But when the war broke out, my world turned upside down. Losing everything familiar, feeling as though the ground beneath you has crumbled, is a devastating experience that's difficult to put into words. Arriving in the UK in May 2022, I was faced with the challenge of rebuilding my life and career from scratch.

Navigating the UK's medical registration system was overwhelming. I quickly realised that I would need to pass a series of exams and possibly spend up to 10 years retraining to regain my status as a consultant doctor. It felt incredibly daunting – almost impossible.

In my search for support, I posted on Facebook, mentioning that I was a rheumatologist from Ukraine. I connected with 15 others in the same situation. Today, our community has grown to nearly 1,200 Ukrainian doctors, nurses and dentists here in the UK. It was during this time that I met Oksana Lovochkina, who established the Ukrainian Medical Charity and together we were doing everything possible to support Ukrainian doctors working toward re-establishing their careers.

Language was another barrier. Though I had a strong foundation from years of teaching with European, American and British guidelines, my English speaking and listening skills were only at a 'tourist level' – far from what was required for exams. Thankfully, I discovered [RefuAid](#), an organisation that provided crucial support and guidance through the language and professional hurdles that I faced. Balancing intense English study, exam preparation, work as an admin in the NHS, and supporting my children and older parents was incredibly challenging, but I managed, driven by a sense of purpose and the hope of contributing to my field once again.

After a lot of hard work and many sleepless nights, I passed my exams with flying colours and achieved GMC registration. Today, I am working as a specialty doctor in rheumatology, where I can finally put my knowledge and 15 years of experience to use in helping patients manage and overcome autoimmune diseases. It's an incredible feeling to give back to the country that welcomed my family and me during our time of need. My life is becoming stable once more, and none of this would have been possible without the kindness and support of those who helped me along the way.



As a representative of the Ukrainian medical community, I understand the struggles that many refugees face in regaining confidence and a sense of identity. I hope that, by sharing my story, I can encourage others to keep moving forward, even when the road seems impossible. Remember you are not alone, and persistence can open doors even in the darkest times.