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MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION IN UKRAINE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine has affected almost all aspects and levels of medical education (undergraduate and postgraduate), becoming an active incentive for the revision of traditional methods and transition to digital education.

Digitalization of medical education implies introduction of digital technologies into the educational process, transferring education to a digital format. In this manner, firstly, it blurs the boundaries between the countries, allowing university teachers and students, interns and doctors to freely cooperate, improving their level of knowledge by participation in various international events (conferences, seminars, congresses, etc.). Secondly, digitalization of medical education in the context of national self-isolation measures can ensure its continuity by transition to distance learning, when educational services are obtained without attending an educational institution, using modern digital technologies and online platforms (Zoom, Moodle, Google meet, etc.). The advantages of the distance learning format are in the fact that students save time and money needed to move between clinical sites; during lectures and practical classes students are in their usual comfortable home environment, while doctors and interns are in the workplace. All this gives them the opportunity to study, without interrupting work. Distance learning implies the availability of the necessary educational materials (presentations of lectures and practical exercises, books, films, methodological recommendations, etc.), which are located on the portal in electronic form.

Introduction of the distance learning format in medical higher educational institutions required significant financial investments, technical and organizational changes by the heads of institutions, noticeable changes in organization of educational content by the teachers, and from students – to adapt to the new learning environment.

Digitalization of education and distance learning, unfortunately, have a number of disadvantages. First, the distance learning format implies prolonged «contact» with a computer and a sedentary lifestyle of the participants in the educational process. This, of course, negatively affects their health. It may lead to the development of

addiction to gadgets, phones, the Internet, as well as the transformation of a person from Homo Sapiens to Homo Digital. Secondly, participants in the educational process may lose their writing skills, which in future will lead to the problem of forming thoughts and perceiving large texts. Thirdly, the distance learning format is less controlled by teachers, consequently, students begin to resort to various strategies of dishonest behavior and minimization of their efforts. The quality of education suffers from this and there will be a shortage of qualified specialists in the future. Fourthly, an important component in the training of medical personnel is the formation of their professional practical skills that cannot be mastered through distance education, even with the use of modern simulators.

Thus, in the conditions of the coronavirus infection in Ukraine and forced self-isolation measures the process of undergraduate and postgraduate medical education had to be significantly changed, switching to digital education and distance learning. Distance learning, which has its disadvantages and advantages, in terms of efficiency, from our point of view, is not inferior to traditional methods of education, and in some cases it even exceeds them. In the current epidemiological situation in the country transformation of medical education is the only measure that ensures the safety and preserves the health of participants in the educational process.