



SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFECTIVE MEDICINES FOR UKRAINIANS (SAFEMed) ACTIVITY

MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST

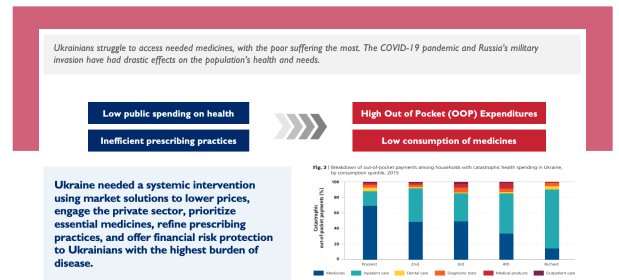
OCTOBER 2023



SAFEMED SECURES TOP HONORS IN USAID HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING CASE COMPETITION

USAID's SAFEMed Activity, in partnership with the National Health Service of Ukraine (NHSU), was selected as one of three winners for the prestigious 2023 USAID Health Systems Strengthening Case Competition. The case submission, titled "SAFEMed and the Affordable Medicines Program in Ukraine: Reducing Inequities in Medicine Access" was among 102 entries from more than 30 countries and highlights how the program has advanced health equity, even in the most difficult circumstances. SAFEMed has been a reliable partner of the Government of Ukraine (GOU) in rolling out the state Affordable Medicines Program since its establishment in 2018 and has since helped the program overcome barriers to lower prices for essential medicines.

During the Virtual Showcase Event on November 6, SAFEMed had the opportunity to present their work alongside the other winners and discuss notable outcomes and lessons learned. SAFEMed highlighted key efforts in achieving these results, including the improvement of private-sector engagement, and how the program has adapted to meet the needs of patients during Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. These informative presentations showed how systems thinking approaches and tools can be successfully incorporated into activities to improve health equity.



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MPU HOLDS NATIONAL FORUM ON E-CATALOG



Photo credit: MPU

MPU team together with SAFEMed colleagues after the forum

Ukraine's national public health sector electronic ordering platform, eCatalog, continues to improve the transparency, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of the country's health care procurement system. To recognize this progress and promote the benefits of using this tool, the Medical Procurement of Ukraine (MPU) organized a national forum entitled "Prozorro Market: A Convenient Procurement Tool" on September 28. With support from SAFEMed, the event drew more than 700 online and 47 offline participants from different health care institutions and departments and included representatives from the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (MOH); Ministry of Economy of Ukraine; and the Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Public Health, Medical Assistance and Medical Insurance.

About SAFEMed

Our work in Ukraine aims to boost transparency, improve cost efficiency, and strengthen the pharmaceutical supply chain, ultimately leading to better availability and use of essential medicines and health commodities for TB, HIV and AIDS, COVID-19, and noncommunicable diseases. We support the Government of Ukraine in its ongoing efforts to reform its health care system in the wake of the war.

Speakers focused on the success of the eCatalog, discussing its development, procurement features, practical algorithms, and legal aspects. In 2023 alone, hospitals were able to save UAH 146.6 million (approximately 4 million USD), which is an average saving of around 24%. Monthly savings amount to 17-19%, which is achieved through improved requests for quotations. Compared to 2022, there was a significant increase in sales - from UAH 20.5 to 450 million. The forum also gave participants the opportunity to ask questions and further deepen their knowledge about effective procurement methods.

SAFEMED HELPS EXPAND AFFORDABLE MEDICINES PROGRAM TO BETTER SUPPORT DIABETES PATIENTS

Due to the support of SAFEMed, the State Reimbursement Program, also known as the Affordable Medicines Program, now covers the cost of test strips for measuring blood glucose levels. The expanded coverage went into effect on October 8 and allows patients with type 1 diabetes to get test strips via ePrescription free of charge or with a partial payment. This is the first ever diagnostic device to be covered by the Reimbursement Program, serving as an important step forward in improving patients' access to care. Over the last year, SAFEMed has provided valuable technical assistance in the development of pricing and reimbursement procedures for these types of products and prepared a comprehensive review and set of recommendations on test strip device reimbursement based on the experience in European countries.

The NHSU has been working over the last several months to launch this new coverage after the MOH officially approved the reimbursement in August with MOH Order #1495. With this coverage in effect, doctors can now issue an ePrescription for up to five strips per day for no longer than 90 days per prescription. As of October 18, according to the NHSU, more than 700 prescriptions for the test strips have already been issued.

SAFEMED CELEBRATES ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MPU AT 5TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY

On October 25, representatives from the MOH, USAID, and other organizations at the national level as well as SAFEMed Chief of Party, Rebecca Kohler, gathered in Kyiv to celebrate the 5th anniversary of the MPU. Since 2018, MPU has helped reduce patients' out-of-pocket expenses and distributed lifesaving medical goods despite facing unforeseen challenges such as COVID-19, Russia's full-scale invasion, leadership changes, and a merger with another state agency. Attendees included: Deputy Minister of Health, Mariya Karchevych; representative from the Committee of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Public Health, Medical Assistance and Medical Insurance, Maksym Perebiynys; USAID/Ukraine Health Office Director, Robin Martz; and head of the Orphan Diseases patient organization, Tetiana Kulesha.

The reception served as an opportunity to highlight MPU's significant results over the past five years. This includes securing substantial savings in the state budget, completing the verification process to attain ISO 37001:2016 certification and showcase it as a zero-tolerance agency for corruption, and pioneering supply chain digitalization efforts. MPU has also been instrumental in helping hospitals improve cost efficiency while strengthening transparency through the successful expansion of the eCatalog procurement tool. Throughout this time, MPU has grown its capacity and continues to work toward becoming a full-scale procurement agency, increasing its staff from 20 donor-supported consultants to more than 150 stated-funded employees and acquiring the state warehouse, Ukrmedpostach, to streamline Ukraine's supply chain network.

MPU General Manager, Edem Adamanov, took time to thank partners for supporting MPU from its start as a pilot project to now, specifically noting the crucial support of USAID in its day-to-day collaboration with the agency. Most importantly, Edem recognized how invaluable the MPU team is in achieving these milestones and ensured that, while the goals of the 2023-2026 strategy may change, the core value of the institution – to advocate for Ukrainian patients – would remain its top priority.



Photo credit: MPU

MPU General Director, Edem Adamanov with Deputy Minister of Health Mariya Karchevych, USAID Health Office Director Robin Martz, and SAFEMed Chief of Party Rebecca Kohler

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