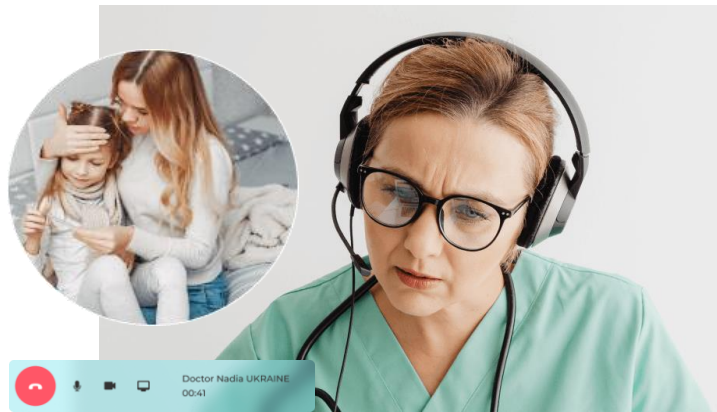


# Ukrainian CrisisCare Telehealth Service



Providing virtual care for the most  
vulnerable  
in this time of need

**PRESS RELEASE**

MARCH 2024

## **GPNOW HELPING UKRAINIAN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACCESS FREE HEALTHCARE SINCE MARCH 2022**

In February 2022, Gina Trandafir, a PII team member and volunteer helping families at the Isaccea border between Romania and Ukraine shared a message: “Last night, I brought two mothers, a grandmother, a puppy and four children to my home in Braila -Ukrainian Refugees”. The mother mentioned her autistic son was under the impression they were coming to Romania to buy a notebook for him. Upon hearing the story locals gathered and gifted the young boy child a tablet! The young boy was so grateful and filled with joy, “I'm so happy, and I don't know what to say “, Gina continued – and so our story began.

“The children I brought to Braila last night sat in a bunker with their mother for a week. They only had their clothes on their backs. They had no other luggage! It was clear to me what happens to innocent children is so cruel!” said Gina. The border was crowded with 700 refugees a day, crossing the Danube on the ferry from Ukraine every hour. Local volunteers ran out of resources very quickly and gave away everything they had with them.

Tatyana was raised in Crimea but moved to Kyiv after the Russian annexation of the peninsula. A dentist and mother of three little girls aged 10, 8, and 3, (now 4) she met her husband, a doctor from Syria and a refugee, after he fled the war zone to Ukraine, where they met and married. Due to fear of nuclear fallout (the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhia NPPs were occupied then). The whole family left Kyiv, where Tanya had been ironically translating medical papers from Ukrainian to Russian less than a month earlier.

They took her mother and a cat and left the keys to their home and car with a stranger in Ukraine. After a two-week travelling through Romania, they arrived in Germany. It was difficult—they spent three frosty nights in a car, crossing the border. It was both moving and distressing.

Gina Trandafir has been a PII team member for many years, PII own and operate the GPNOW Telehealth platform [www.gpnow.net](http://www.gpnow.net) and she reached out to Robert Hicken Founder & CEO based in Singapore to discuss whether a telehealth service could be launched to help Ukrainian families affected by the conflict.

GPNOW initiatives are focused on providing virtual care for the most vulnerable and had previously helped thousands of indigenous and disabled people in Australia and Malaysia access primary medical aid in crisis circumstances during the pandemic. On March 3, 2022, Robert, Gina and Tanya connected via the GPNOW telehealth platform. However, launching such a service in a “warzone” half round the round was an unprecedented challenge. Backed by Amazon Web Services extensive testing commenced in March 2022 including the very first consultation with a “patient” in Germany, a “doctor” in Singapore and a “translator” in Romania. It was the beginning of the mission of the Ukraine Crisis Care Telehealth Service, provided by GPNOW, an initiative of the PII Foundation [www.pii-foundation.org](http://www.pii-foundation.org)

The telehealth service launched with Romanian doctors but soon onboarded certified Ukrainian doctors many of whom were displaced parents (mainly mothers) unable to practice in their new locations to try to make primary care more accessible to the refugees and their children. Nataliia, originally from Odesa

and who fled to Berlin, got in touch with a psychologist and a pediatrician through the platform. Natalia said finding help in her new home was challenging because, although local doctors were supportive, explaining herself to strangers was very difficult. “Only Ukrainian people could understand Ukrainian souls,” Natalia said.

In just three months, GPNow had onboarded 225 patients and 32 doctors and conducted more than 286 free consultations for vulnerable Ukrainians. AWS funded all of the work up until the end of 2022, making the impossible possible every day as the service expanded its offerings and grew globally helping families in Ukraine (including occupied territory), across Europe and the world.

Rostislav, a 19-year-old from Kharkiv who fled to Israel, found the GPNow site and was very surprised by the doctors' support and help. “For the last five days, I have had a problem with breathing. I can’t get a full lungful of air. I went to many doctors, but no one could understand what was happening to me. And then I left an application [to GPNow] that I needed medical help, described the problem (it was at night) and the next day in the morning, Tatyana Alhamad wrote to me. She arranged all consultations that eventually solved the problem”, told his story Rostislav. Rostislav then moved to Israel where he received ongoing mental health support for trauma for many weeks from the Ukrainian CrisisCare Hospital in the Cloud.

Anastasia, an 18-year-old who fled from Kyiv, was living alone in a hostel in Poznan, Poland, while her fiancé and now husband was a soldier fighting in the frontline back home in Ukraine. Anastasia had life-threatening throat and neck cancer and needed immediate treatment. She could not get the urgently needed treatment in Poland as the surgery was extremely dangerous and expensive, with a 50% probability of success and a high risk of being paralyzed for life. She contacted the Ukrainian Crisis Care Telehealth Service.

Dr. Tatyana Alhamad, the UCTS Practice Manager, took her case and reached out to Dr. Vadim Illyashenko, the Chief Medical Officer at GPNow. They contacted specialists in Poland, Finland, Germany, Canada, and the USA including an assessment of Anastasia’s case by the top oncologists at Yale New Haven clinic.

With the assistance of Marta Maleka, a BeAHeroUA member, Anastasia eventually got to Leiden Medical University in the Netherlands, where she got the best assessment and treatment of her case from Professor Pell and his incredible team of surgeons, doctors and nurses specializing in Chondral Chordoma. The Dutch government generously covered the treatment’s cost. Since then, Anastasia has gone through three rounds of surgery and continues to fight for her life.

In two years, the Ukrainian Crisis Care Telehealth Service has provided over **16,000** free professional medical consultations to over **10,000** displaced Ukrainian families with over **4,000** CHILDREN **24/7**. To provide help and assistance, the project involved **75** Ukrainian doctors and health professionals in primary care, psychology, pediatric, and other specialized medical services as well as veterinary care. **[END]**

## ABOUT THE PII FOUNDATION

The [PII Foundation](#), a US based registered charity - 501 9c(3) non-profit organisation (EIN: 92-1201579) ([GuideStar Silver Certified](#)). Established in 2022, to fund and resource humanitarian initiatives delivering “Virtual Care for the Most Vulnerable” around the world. <https://www.pii-foundation.org/>

The PII Foundation supports Disaster Relief & Health Equity projects focused on improving patient care for people who are unable to access the level of primary health care that so many of us take for granted.

Our partner programs have already helped thousands of people including those traumatized by natural disasters, indigenous people living in remote locations, the disabled whose access to treatment has been affected by Covid, including a remote Rapid Antigen Test testing service during the pandemic.

Backed by [Amazon Web Services \(AWS\)](#) and working in collaboration with the [World Organisation of Family Doctors \(Vasco da Gama Movement\)](#) - our latest humanitarian initiative is the [Ukrainian CrisisCare Telehealth Service \(UCTS\)](#)

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