

# Pain & Policy Studies Group • International Pain Policy Fellowship



UKRAINE

**Nataliia Datsiuk, MPH, Specialist Degree – Pharm.  
Fellow 2012-2014**

Professor, Organization and Economics of Pharmacy Dept.  
Bogomelets National Medical University, Kyiv

For further information on Ukraine:  
<http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/country/profile/ukraine>



## BACKGROUND:

For many years international palliative care experts and non-governmental organizations have been calling attention to the extremely cumbersome opioid prescribing regulations and practices in Ukraine, including the lack of oral morphine. Prior to the fellowship, in 2011, Ukraine was the subject of an in-depth study by Human Rights Watch in regards to opioid accessibility and availability, which highlighted the obstacles to accessing opioid medicines. According to Human Rights Watch's World Report 2013, "Tens of thousands of patients with advanced cancer suffer from severe pain and other symptoms every year."

At the onset of the fellowship, oral morphine was not registered in the country. Other strong opioid analgesics were (and still are) hard to access, provided in ways that fundamentally deviated from the World Health Organization recommendations, or were simply unavailable. Prescribing regulations were arbitrary and cumbersome. The national HIV/AIDS program referred to opioids, but the cancer program did not. Pharmacy and medical curricula scant the clinical application of opioids.

## FELLOWSHIP SUCCESSES:

In May 2012, the Ukrainian government, along with international experts, held a meeting entitled, "Ukrainian Society and Drugs: Building a New Strategic Approach." During this meeting a draft National Drug Strategy was developed with a focus on improving the availability of controlled medicine to patients in need. The Strategy was finalized and was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers in August 2013.

Decree #333 was passed in May of 2013, which allows for simpler prescribing methods for physicians treating those who suffer from pain.

After many years of educating government officials about the importance of oral morphine for palliative care and negotiations with manufactures, oral morphine was made available in Ukraine for the first time. In February 2013, Order #77 was signed approving market authorization for a local manufacturer to begin producing 5 and 10 mg immediate-release morphine tablets.

During 2013-2015 seminars for physicians and pharmacists about palliative care, opioid prescribing and new legislation were held in different regions of Ukraine.

## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE NEEDS:

In August 2015 Order #494 which made corresponding changes to Decree#333 was signed. Two years of inconsistency between laws prevents physicians and other medical personnel from adopting the new prescribing methods. Additionally, medical personnel continue to lack awareness of the changes in opioid handling laws and most of them continue to work in accordance with old practice.

## PUBLICATIONS:

- Human Rights Watch. Uncontrolled Pain: Ukraine's obligation to ensure evidence-based palliative care. 2011 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/12/uncontrolled-pain/ukraines-obligation-ensure-evidence-based-palliative-care>
- Human Rights Watch. Ukraine: New Breakthrough for Incurably Ill: Drug regulations will benefit tens of thousands. 2013 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/15/ukraine-new-breakthrough-incurably-ill>



PAIN & POLICY  
STUDIES GROUP

[www.painpolicy.wisc.edu](http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu)