

Five Ukrainian surgeons visit UNMC



LIZ RYMAREV, THE WORLD-HERALD

Viktor Romanchuk, head of the planned surgery department with the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Central Region in Ukraine, presents a map of clinics and patient transport routes in Ukraine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha on Friday.

Portion of the exchange emphasized trauma and war injuries

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In a lecture hall thousands of miles from the war in Ukraine, three of five surgeons visiting Omaha last week as part of a cultural and educational exchange shared stories of the work they have done to save soldiers and civilians in the two years since Russia's full-scale invasion.

The five, plus a facilitator, arrived in Omaha on Nov. 8 as part of a visit through the Congressional Office for International Leadership's Open World Program, as Sen. Ben Nelson Fellows. The program is named in honor

of Nelson, who served as a U.S. senator representing Nebraska from 2001 to 2013. He currently is chairman of the organization's board of trustees, according to its website.

Locally, the Friendship Force of Greater Omaha has sponsored visitors from a number of nations that formerly were part of the Soviet Union, housing visitors in their homes, providing meals and arranging stops at area sights, said David Crouse, a volunteer with the organization.

For the past three years, he said, delegates have hailed from Ukraine and visits have focused on medical topics important to the visitors, including HIV/AIDS and post-traumatic stress

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LIZ RYMAREV PHOTOS, THE WORLD-HERALD

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Surgeons

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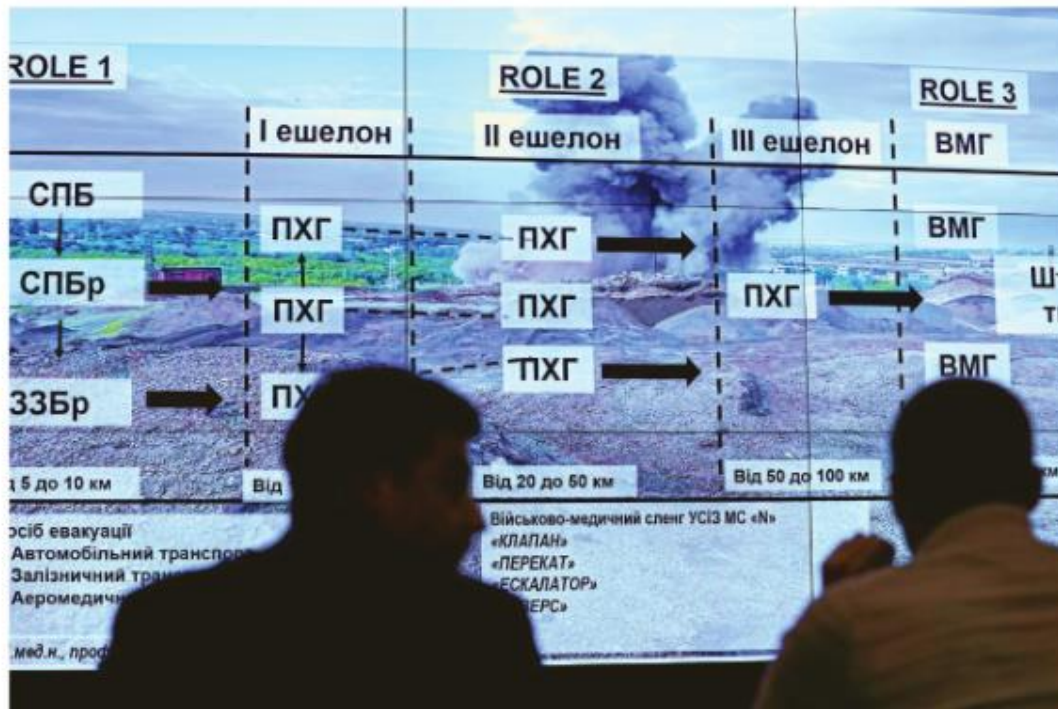
syndrome. The University of Nebraska Medical Center hosted the educational portion of the exchange, with an emphasis on trauma and war injuries this year, said Crouse, a professor emeritus at UNMC.

Speaking through an interpreter, Viktor Romanchuk, head of the planned surgery department with the Military Medical Clinical Center of the Central Region, explained in an interview that many lives were saved after officials reorganized a mobile surgical hospital a little more than half a mile from the front line.

Patients can't be transported by air because of the risk of missile and drone strikes, said Romanchuk, who had been chief surgeon on the front for more than two years. Transporting them to hospitals on the ground takes five to six hours. After the change, mortality decreased more than tenfold.

Romanchuk said the visit, which began Nov. 2 in Washington, D.C., has been a "very good experience." The surgeons have learned and taught students and shared information about technical equipment. The U.S. is the main source of the technology.

"Also our target is also share our experience, to show our works in the front line, especially



A slide with a flowchart of surgical roles over an image of a drone strike in Ukraine is presented at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha on Friday.

our subject of service on the front line," he said.

Romanchuk said the surgeons have a lot of ideas they want to develop, such as managing tourniquets to prevent amputations and save limbs.

He said the group saw a lot of departments at UNMC, including its training centers for students and a surgical robot, and met a lot of great people. He said he also enjoyed spending time with his host.

Crouse said the surgeons all

visited Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium and the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace Museum.

"Everything is great," Romanchuk said. "Each day is a wonderful day."

Still, many of the experiences they shared, and the wounds they have treated, were grim ones. Many injuries in the war are caused by shelling rather than bullets.

But there have been amazing saves. A neurosurgeon told of

the most complicated case in his military career, which involved a child who suffered a head wound in shelling. He operated, and several days later, the child was able to rejoin her family.

Said Crouse, "This is their opportunity to share some of what they've experienced and how this war has turned their lives upside down."

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