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# Organizational resilience of the mental health system in wartime: ensuring accessibility and continuity of care for the female population

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The organizational stability of the mental health system in wartime is one of the key factors in ensuring the availability and continuity of medical care for the population. Special attention is needed for the female population, who belong to the most vulnerable groups in the conditions of military conflicts due to the increased risk of developing anxiety, depressive, and post-traumatic stress disorders, forced displacement, loss of social support and the growth of gender-based violence.

**Aim** – to systematize modern scientific data on the organizational stability of mental health systems in war conditions and to determine the mechanisms for ensuring the availability and continuity of assistance to the female population, taking into account the Ukrainian experience.

The analysis of literary sources proved that the most effective mechanisms for ensuring the sustainability of the mental health system are the integration of psychiatric care into the primary medical link, the development of interdisciplinary teams, the introduction of telemedicine technologies and the expansion of public support services. It was established that continuity of the patient's route, territorial availability of services, psychological support during displacement and specialized programs for internally displaced persons, mothers, wives of servicemen, and female veterans are of particular importance for women in war conditions. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates an active transformation of the mental health system, but staffing problems, uneven access to services and the need for further development of gender-oriented approaches remain.

**Conclusions.** The organizational resilience of the mental health system in the context of war is determined by the ability to ensure the availability of care for the most vulnerable population groups, in particular, women. The integration of mental health services into all levels of medical care, the expansion of digital services, the strengthening of intersectoral interaction, and the introduction of gender-sensitive models of care organization are promising areas of development.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Keywords:** mental health, organizational sustainability, war, female population, availability of care, continuity of medical care, Ukraine.

## Організаційна стійкість системи психічного здоров'я в умовах війни: забезпечення доступності та безперервності допомоги для жіночого населення

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Організаційна стійкість системи психічного здоров'я в умовах війни є одним із ключових чинників забезпечення доступності та безперервності медичної допомоги населенню. Особливої уваги потребує жіноче населення, яке належить до найбільш уразливих груп в умовах воєнних конфліктів через підвищений ризик розвитку тривожних, депресивних та посттравматичних стресових розладів, вимушене переміщення, втрату соціальної підтримки та зростання гендерно зумовленого насильства.

**Мета** – систематизувати сучасні наукові дані щодо організаційної стійкості систем психічного здоров'я в умовах війни та визначити механізми забезпечення доступності й безперервності допомоги жіночому населенню з урахуванням українського досвіду.

Аналіз літературних джерел засвідчив, що найбільш ефективними механізмами забезпечення стійкості системи психічного здоров'я є інтеграція психіатричної допомоги в первинну медичну ланку, розвиток міждисциплінарних команд, впровадження телемедичних технологій та розширення громадських сервісів підтримки. Встановлено, що для жінок в умовах війни особливе значення мають безперервність маршруту пацієнта, територіальна доступність послуг, психологічна підтримка під час переміщення та спеціалізовані програми для внутрішньо переміщених осіб, матерів, дружин військовослужбовців і жінок-ветеранок. Український досвід демонструє активну трансформацію системи психічного здоров'я, однак зберігаються проблеми кадрового забезпечення, нерівномірності доступу до послуг та необхідності подальшого розвитку гендерно-орієнтованих підходів.

**Висновки.** Організаційна стійкість системи психічного здоров'я в умовах війни визначається здатністю забезпечувати доступність допомоги для найбільш уразливих груп населення, зокрема жінок. Перспективними напрямами розвитку є інтеграція послуг психічного здоров'я у всі рівні медичної допомоги, розширення цифрових сервісів, посилення міжсекторальної взаємодії та впровадження гендерно-чутливих моделей організації допомоги.

Автори заявляють про відсутність конфлікту інтересів.

**Ключові слова:** психічне здоров'я, організаційна стійкість, війна, жіноче населення, доступність допомоги, безперервність медичної допомоги, Україна.

## Introduction

War is one of the most powerful destabilizing factors affecting the state of public health and the functioning of health care systems. Military conflicts are accompanied by significant demographic, social and economic losses, destruction of infrastructure, forced displacement of the population and disruption of access to medical services [5,8]. One of the areas most sensitive to the effects of war is the field of mental health, as prolonged exposure to danger, uncertainty, and chronic stress contributes to an increase in the prevalence of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders [4,6].

Women are a particularly vulnerable category of the population in the conditions of hostilities. Along with common psycho-traumatizing factors, they face additional challenges related to the need to care for children and elderly family members, forced displacement, loss of housing, social connections and sources of income [11,12]. An important risk factor is also the increase in cases of gender-based violence and psychological exhaustion. In this regard, provision of timely, continuous and accessible psychiatric and psychosocial assistance to the female population is of particular importance in the health care system [7,8,14].

In recent years, the concept of organizational sustainability of health care systems has become widespread in international scientific literature. Organizational resilience is considered the system's ability to effectively respond to crisis challenges, adapt to changes in the external environment, and maintain the continuity of service provision even under conditions of significant load. For the mental health system, this means maintaining the availability of care, staffing capacity, financial resources, and coordination mechanisms between different levels of medical and social support [17,22].

For Ukraine, the problem of organizational stability of the mental health system became especially relevant after the start of a full-scale war [1,2]. The growth of the population's needs for psychological and psychiatric care occurs simultaneously with the challenges associated with population migration, staffing shortages, uneven access to medical services, and the need to transform existing care delivery models [5,7,9]. Under such conditions, it is important to analyze scientific approaches to ensuring the availability and continuity of mental health services for women, as well as the generalization of international and Ukrainian experience in the formation of sustainable models of the organization of assistance in war conditions.

**Aim** – to systematize modern scientific data on the organizational stability of mental health systems in war conditions and to determine the mechanisms for ensuring the availability and continuity of assistance to the female population, taking into account the Ukrainian experience.

The study was carried out in the format of a systematic review of scientific literature with the aim of summarizing modern approaches to ensuring the organizational stability of mental health systems in war conditions and determining mechanisms for supporting the availability and continuity of assistance to the female population. Sources were searched in international scientometric databases Scopus, Web of Science and PubMed. The analysis included scientific articles, reviews, analytical reports of international organizations and documents in the field of mental health care published in 2014–2025.

The search strategy was based on the use of combinations of keywords related to mental health, military conflicts, organization of health care, gender aspects and accessibility of services. The inclusion criteria were the availability of the full text of the publication, relevance to the research topic, and coverage of organizational aspects of providing assistance to women in humanitarian crises or military operations. Publications devoted exclusively to clinical aspects of treatment without consideration of the organizational mechanisms of the functioning of the mental health system were excluded from the analysis.

After the initial selection of sources, a qualitative content analysis of the selected materials was carried out, followed by thematic grouping of the results. The main areas of analysis were the availability of mental health services, continuity of medical care, human resources, intersectoral interaction, development of community-oriented services, and the use of digital technologies. To generalize the obtained data, methods of system analysis, comparison, and scientific synthesis were applied, which made it possible to determine the key components of the organizational stability of mental health systems in war conditions and their importance for meeting the needs of the female population.

The analysis of scientific sources proved that war is one of the most significant risk factors for the mental health of the population. Women are a particularly vulnerable category who, along with the general consequences of military operations, face additional psycho-emotional and social burdens [1,8,10]. According to the analyzed studies, the pre-

valence of anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional exhaustion, and adaptation disorders is significantly increasing among the female population. Factors that worsen the mental state of women include forced displacement, loss of loved ones, destruction of social ties, economic instability, and increased risk of gender-based violence [5,6,9].

The analysis of the literature showed that in the conditions of war, the load on the mental health system increases, which requires the use of mechanisms of organizational stability. In most studies, organizational sustainability is considered as the ability of the health care system to adapt to crisis conditions, ensuring the continuity of service provision and maintaining their availability for the population [2,14,18]. It has been established that the most sustainable systems are those that have developed coordination mechanisms between different levels of medical care, sufficient human resources and the ability to quickly redistribute resources in accordance with the needs of the population [15].

Among the key components of organizational sustainability, effective management, personnel support, sufficient level of financing, intersectoral interaction and the use of modern digital technologies are most often identified [11,17]. It has been established that the integration of mental health services into primary care is one of the most effective approaches to increasing the population's access to psychological and psychiatric support. This model makes it possible to detect mental disorders in a timely manner and ensure the referral of patients to specialized services. In addition, the integration of mental health into the primary care system helps to reduce the stigmatization of patients and increases the level of seeking help [3,4].

The development of community-oriented mental health services is an important direction for increasing the stability of the system. In many countries that have experienced armed conflicts, mobile multidisciplinary teams, crisis centers for psychological support and programs for psychosocial support of the population have demonstrated their effectiveness [12]. Such services are especially important for women who live in remote communities or are in the status of internally displaced persons [13]. They provide more flexible access to services and enable prompt response to the needs of the population in an unstable security situation.

Digital technologies and telemedicine play a special role in ensuring continuity of care. Remote counseling allows you to maintain contact between the patient and the specialist even under the conditions of population displacement, transport restrictions, or the destruction of the medical infrastructure [19,20]. Research analysis shows that telepsychology and telepsychiatry have become important tools for supporting women's mental health during wartime crises. Digital services have a special value for people who are outside their place of permanent residence or who do not have the opportunity to personally visit medical institutions [16].

It was established that among the most effective organizational solutions, intersectoral models of interaction also stand out. They provide for the coordination of activities of medical institutions, social services, educational institutions, public organizations, and international partners. This approach provides a comprehensive response to the needs of women and allows combining medical, psychological and social support [22]. Many studies emphasize that interagency interaction is a necessary condition for the effective functioning of the mental health system during humanitarian crises [21].

Active development of the mental health system in conditions of full-scale war is characteristic of Ukraine. It was established that one of the priority areas of reform was the expansion of the availability of psychological care at the level of primary medical care, the implementation of psychosocial support programs and the development of cooperation between state, public and international organizations [15,17]. At the same time, scientific publications note such problems as the shortage of specialists, the uneven distribution of resources between regions, and the growing needs of the population for mental health services [7,12].

Considerable attention in research is paid to certain categories of women who need additional support. These include internally displaced persons, spouses of military personnel, women veterans, mothers of children with disabilities, and survivors of violence or loss of family members. For these groups, specialized programs of psychological assistance, long-term psychosocial support and provision of continuous access to relevant services regardless of the place of stay are necessary [5,19,21].

The obtained results are consistent with the conclusions of international studies, which consider organizational sustainability as one of the key characteristics of an effective health care system in crisis and emergency situations [1,3]. It has been established that traditional models of psychiatric care,

focused mainly on inpatient treatment, are less effective in the conditions of military conflicts compared to flexible community-oriented approaches [16, 22]. This is due to the need to quickly adapt to changing conditions and ensure the availability of assistance to the population regardless of their location.

Particular attention is drawn to the need to implement gender-sensitive models of care [4]. Women have specific mental health needs related to family and social roles, bereavement, childcare and increased vulnerability to violence. Taking these features into account is an important condition for effective planning and organization of mental health services. At the same time, the analysis of the literature shows that the gender component is still insufficiently integrated into the practice of functioning of many health care systems [8,14].

The results of the review indicate that the most promising model for ensuring the sustainability of the mental health system is a combination of several interrelated components: the integration of mental health into primary medical care, the development of public services, the use of digital technologies, personnel training, and interagency cooperation. This approach allows for the continuity of assistance even under conditions of significant external challenges. It is important that each of the specified components cannot provide the proper result separately, and the efficiency of the system is determined precisely by the level of their interaction [2,6].

The problem of staffing the mental health system is of particular importance. In the conditions of war, the need for specialists in psychiatry, psychology, psychotherapy, and social work is growing [18]. At the same time, the system faces the migration of specialists, occupational burnout, and uneven distribution of human resources between regions. This requires the development of new approaches to professional training, the development of postgraduate education programs, and support for specialists who work with traumatized categories of the population [9,10].

For Ukraine, the formation of a long-term strategy for the development of the mental health system that takes into account the consequences of the war is of particular importance. It is necessary to further expand the network of available services, increase the personnel potential of the system, improve coordination mechanisms between medical and social services, as well as develop support programs for women who belong to high-risk groups [13]. An important component of such changes should be the development of digital infrastructure and the creation of a unified information environment for the coordination of psychosocial care [11].

The results of the conducted review confirm that ensuring the organizational stability of the mental health system in wartime requires a comprehensive approach that combines medical, social and management mechanisms. Gender sensitivity, the development of innovative care delivery models, and increased intersectoral collaboration can contribute to increasing the availability and continuity of mental health services for war-affected women.

## Conclusions

A systematic review of the scientific literature proved that ensuring the organizational stability of the mental health system is one of the key tasks of health care in wartime. Military operations significantly increase the population's need for psychological and psychiatric care, with women being among the most vulnerable groups due to a combination of psycho-emotional, social and economic risk factors.

It has been established that the availability and continuity of assistance to the female population largely depends on the ability of the mental health system to adapt to crisis conditions, maintain the functioning of existing services and implement new organizational response mechanisms. The most effective approaches are the integration of mental health services into primary medical care, the development of community-oriented services, the use of telemedicine technologies, intersectoral interaction and the introduction of gender-sensitive support models.

The analysis of the Ukrainian experience showed that the mental health system has demonstrated the ability to adapt in the conditions of a full-scale war. However, staffing problems, uneven access to services and the need for further development of comprehensive support programs for women remain. Internally displaced persons, spouses of military personnel, women veterans, and other categories of the population who experience increased psychosocial stress need special attention.

Promising directions for further development are strengthening the organizational stability of the mental health system, expanding digital services, increasing personnel potential, and improving coordination mechanisms between medical, social, and public structures in order to provide timely and continuous assistance to the female population in conditions of long-term crisis challenges.

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