



Digital psychological tools in complex emergencies. Putting the concept into action in Ukraine

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This text contains information about these digital psychological tools in complex emergency situations.

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Unprecedented number of civilians joined armed forces of Ukraine rapidly, increasing the total number of mobilised personnel 4-5 times. Civil mental health professionals were also mobilised to support service members and territory defence units and their family members. Since the beginning of war, international military psychiatry and psychology experts were supporting Ukrainian community in various ways, including participation in educational webinars and panel discussions in such topics as psychological first aid for military, psychiatric care during ongoing operation, survivability in combat situations, leadership in the army, transition back from war. However, due to shortage of military psychologists and psychiatrists, prohibition for civil psychologist to provide support at military hospitals and limited capacity to provide mental health support at the front line highlights the value of digital formats.

On the second day of the war, a Telegram-based self-help chatbot called *was activated for Ukraine*. A chatbot simulates a text conversation with a virtual psychologist on a mobile phone. The chatbot is based on psychological first aid, with the recommendations adjusted for the ongoing stress of the war (Frankova et al, 2022). It contains various exercises, tasks, and useful recommendations on relaxation exercises and stress management. Eight weeks after being made available it has already reached more than 50 000 users. The chatbot was developed to promote mental health and based on existing resources, capable to deliver neuroscience and evidence-based recommendations during the 'Golden Hours' right after the escalation of war in Ukraine.

References

1. Frankova, I., Vermetten, E., Shalev, A. Y., Sijbrandij, M., Holmes, E. A., Ursano, R., Schmidt U., & Zohar, J. (2022). Digital psychological first aid for Ukraine. *The Lancet Psychiatry*.