A “return ticket” for people who use drugs: media/advocacy campaign to promote OST in Ukraine.

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Brief Intro:

- OST with buprenorphine started in 2004 and with methadone in 2008 in Ukraine
- many opponents and obstacles preventing better access of people who use drugs to OST programs
- limited scale-up and quality of existing programs.
- potential OST patients, OST patients and their parents are the key players who advocate for OST in Ukraine and in other countries.
Preceding events:

«Mommy, why am I a monster» billboards (2008)

“Drug users do not have healthy children”
Return Ticket information campaign

• meant as a reaction to the preceding biased big board campaign
• launched in 5 cities of Ukraine in the end of 2008.
• initiated by the group of people who use drugs and who were potential OST patients
• promoted tolerance to people who use drugs and advocated for better access to OST programs in Ukraine.
Pasha Kutsev and ‘Drop in center’ NGO team conducted this campaign with support of media professionals and partners
The campaign was multi-component:

1. Outdoor advertising tools: **big boards** were posted outdoors in 5 cities of Ukraine

2. **Web site** “Zapytay! (Ask)” [www.zpt.in.ua](http://www.zpt.in.ua)
   ZPT is a acronym for OST in Ukrainian and shortened version of “ask”

3. A series of **press conferences**, a **press tour** for journalists and the **briefing with the Ministry of Health**
The concept of “return ticket” is to show that OST plays a role of ticket to “normal life” for drug users.
There were three versions: return to family, to society and to job—the main benefits and values of OST for a person and for the society.
2008-2009: 7187 visitors and 1920 registered users
Biggest Internet resource on OST in Ukraine

www.zpt.in.ua

• detailed information on many aspects related to OST
• general information on OST
• relevant legislation
• list of OST sites in Ukraine
• relevant hot-line services for OST patients as well as forum
• possibility to ask an expert on your choice: doctor, lawyer, human rights advocate, OST patient or parent online
• created and maintained by IDUs, some of them are OST patients
dep03p.livejournal.com/

- created in late 2008 by Pasha Kutsev
- to post information among bloggers: drug users, ST clients and average interested Internet users
- Pasha posts his thoughts, comments, video/photos
- Videos/photos disclose problems in implementation of ST programs, violations of programs’ patients, etc.
- discusses postings with other bloggers
Events for journalists just before the AIDS International Day to let journalists opportunity to get relevant information in time:

- briefing with the Ministry of Health officials
- a series of press conferences
- press tour to OST site
Briefing with the Ministry of Health officials

7 central national TV channels covered the event.

2 information agencies (UNIAN and Liga-Inform) broadcast from the briefing.

This information was used by numerous printed and Internet media outlets later. Thus, the initial message was distributed fully, namely: MoH stated: “The biggest achievement of the state in combating HIV/AIDS epidemic was introduction of methadone substitution therapy.”

Maryna Zelenskaya,
AIDS Committee of MoH of Ukraine
There were no “negative” comments (for the first time in Ukraine regarding OST and drug users in general).

Various periodicals just used different titles, but the statistics and statement of the government official were translated very accurately and positively:


**Golos.UA**: In the past six months, 64 facilities providing substitution maintenance therapy for drug users were launched in Ukraine: [http://www.golosua.com/suspilstvo/2008/12/01/za-pivroku-v-ukrayini-vidkrito-64-zakladi-sho-nada/](http://www.golosua.com/suspilstvo/2008/12/01/za-pivroku-v-ukrayini-vidkrito-64-zakladi-sho-nada/)

**ForUm**: “By the end of 2013, 20,000 drug users will receive assistance from the state budget”:
[http://for-ua.com/ukraine/2008/12/01/131205.html](http://for-ua.com/ukraine/2008/12/01/131205.html)

**E-news**: “By the end of 2013, 20,000 drug users will receive assistance from the state budget”:
press tour (right after the briefing with MoH)
Journalists visited the OST site at the “Sociotherapy” clinic

Communicated with:

• patients
• their parents
• doctors
During the press tour journalists were accompanied by Mariya Lebedeva and Taras Ratushniy, OST-friendly journalists.

Mariya and Taras developed **information packages** on DVDs for the tours participants. **DVDs contained:**

- information about the campaign “Zapitay!” (Ask!) (video, texts, photos);
- video-taped experts’ comments on OST *(by Anatoliy Viyevskiy, Chief MoH’s Narcologist, Alla Scherbinskaya, Director of the National AIDS Center)*,
- video from OST sites in Mykolayiv and Kherson prepared by other journalists who had visited these sites before as well as other relevant materials.
Journalists used these video materials as well as their own in the TV reports on December 1.

The press events resulted in a **large number of printed, Internet and video coverage at national channels that helped to make public sentiment more positive**:

- [http://health.unian.net/ukr/detail/194019](http://health.unian.net/ukr/detail/194019)
- [http://for-ua.com/ukraine/2008/12/01/131205.html](http://for-ua.com/ukraine/2008/12/01/131205.html)
- [http://health.unian.net/rus/detail/193749](http://health.unian.net/rus/detail/193749)
- [http://korrespondent.net/tech/health/650948](http://korrespondent.net/tech/health/650948)
- [http://news.bigmir.net/health/70663/](http://news.bigmir.net/health/70663/)
Conclusions / lessons learned:

What made the campaign successful:

• it was initiated and conducted by IDU community;
• a unique example of public and business partnership when important public health advertisements were produced and disseminated by advertising professionals for free;
• the MoH supported the campaign by participating in the press-conferences and briefing for journalists;
• considerable positive media coverage as an indicator of interest from mass media was reached;
• content of publications and TV programs became more positive and supportive.
Lessons learned:
It was the first and the only general public awareness campaign on the OST topic in Ukraine so far.

The main lesson for future work is to do more focused campaigns. More focused in terms of:

• target audience (to concentrate the efforts of future campaigns on more specific groups: potential OST patients, their parents, or on doctors and local officials depending on the task of any specific campaign);
• relevant and specific channels for concrete messages to ensure that target group will get these messages.
Thank you for your attention!

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