



EPA GAINING EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME REPORT

On the observership visit at the Geha Mental Health Center, Tel Aviv, Israel

Realised 2-22 September

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My name is Dmitriy Ivashchenko, and I am a child psychiatrist from Moscow, Russia. I had a three-week internship at the Geha Mental Health Center in Tel-Aviv, Israel. That hospital is a huge mental health center in Israel, with excellent facilities and qualified staff. It was a great pleasure for me to do an internship at Geha Mental Health Center, and to see the famous Israeli medicine with my own eyes.

My intern supervisor prof. Gil Zalsman is a world-renowned expert in child psychiatry, particularly in the treatment of depression in adolescents. I have had the opportunity to be with him and see how he works, interacts with patients, and this is a truly unique experience.

My internship included changes between several departments. Geha Clinic includes adult departments (closed and open), children's closed, children's "One-day" department, children's polyclinic, and separate department for preschoolers. In addition to the medical units, the clinic has its zoo for psychotherapy, electro-convulsive treatment room, school, gym, many beautiful walking yards.

First of all, I was at the children closed ward. I was very impressed by the organization of the department, which does not have traditional hospital bedrooms - children live in rooms of 2-3 people each. Patients and doctors have a hectic daily routine. Every day all the staff of the department met to discuss current issues, treatment of patients. It is also traditional to have meetings with patients, to sum up what kind of improvement each child is seeing. This helps to unite the patient and doctor alliance. It should be noted that I have not noticed a substantial difference between the different staff members of the department: doctors, psychologists, social teachers, and teachers are equally involved in the treatment process, each of them performs his or her role, and there are no secondary ones. It was also new to me that the psychologist could know the patient's medical history on an equal footing with the doctor.

Patients are always busy: they go to school every day, attend classes with a psychotherapist, go to the zoo to interact with animals, work out in the gym, and even go to special educational centers, such as agricultural classes. This kind of care for children with mental health problems is very encouraging.



After that, I did an internship in a closed adult ward. I had the opportunity to compare the organization of the departments and the treatment process in Russia and Israel. In general, adult psychiatry in our countries is organized in the same way, but in Israel, the rehabilitation of patients with mental disorders is much more advanced. Pharmacological treatment of mental disorders in a closed ward for adults - in general, similar to the Russian system. I also participated in all medical meetings, patient checkups, and discussed diagnoses and treatment approaches with colleagues. All the doctors were very friendly to me, always translating the patients' words into English so that I was involved on an equal footing with them.

The room for electro-convulsive treatment (ECT) is organized quite well. It operates in "constant flow" mode, with five beds alternating between ECT sessions for patients. The procedure is carried out at the most modern level, under the supervision of a psychiatrist and an anesthesiologist.

A great event was my time in the preschooler's ward, where, under the guidance of the charismatic Dr. Miriam Peskin, I got acquainted with the organization of mental health care for young children. The department is located in a specially constructed two-storey building, perfectly equipped for children and employees. There are a playground, sports, creativity, and group therapy rooms. Dr. Miriam Peskin not only showed me the work of the department but also gave me several exciting lectures on the psychopathology of development, answered many of my questions, involved me in conversations with parents of patients, shared educational materials. Getting to know the work of the preschool department has inspired me to deepen my knowledge in this particular area.

The final part of my internship took place in the One-day department for children run by Gil Zalsman. His colleague, Dr. Nasril, constantly supervised me, and she was translating the words of her colleagues and patients to me. I participated in exams of patients, daily meetings between staff and patients. Specialists of the ward gave me lectures about occupational therapy, methods of psychological diagnostics. A lot differs from what is used in Russia, and this experience is entirely new to me. It was fascinating to understand the organization of the treatment process, which includes both drugs and psychotherapy, in particular - a system of rewards (token economy system). This method is very useful, and I will use this experience in my further work.

Despite the fact that everyone there speaks Hebrew, the doctors of the departments have been interpreting all the words of the patients during examinations and meetings into English.



Sometimes I was lucky, and some colleagues translated into Russian because there were a lot of Russian-speaking people working in Israel.

In addition to my work in the clinic, it was the first time I had been to such a wonderful country as Israel. I had the opportunity to visit Jerusalem, Haifa, Jaffa, and Tel Aviv. It is truly a unique country, not for nothing called a "miracle."

At the end of my internship, I invited Prof. Gil Zalsman to visit the School of Child Psychiatry for young scientists in Moscow, which we plan to organize in March 2020, as a Keynote speaker. To my great joy, he accepted the offer, and it will serve to promote evidence-based medicine in child psychiatry in my country. I believe this is one of the most significant achievements of the internship.

I would also like to thank Sima Marshall, executive assistant of Gil Zalsman. She was in charge of organizing the internship before it started, was always in touch and took care of me during my stay in Israel. It was thanks to her that my internship went very smoothly, I could not worry about anything. I'm delighted I got this unique experience, which I can bring to my colleagues and my patients. I recommend to young psychiatrists from other countries visit the Geha Mental Health Center and see their psychiatry service with their own eyes.