

Ukraine Emerges as a Viable Location for Global Studies

- Trials are on the rise in the country, where recruitment rates are high but custom procedures can pose a problem.

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Applied Clinical Trials

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As the established market for clinical trials becomes increasingly competitive in the United States and Western Europe, relatively new regions are becoming a popular location for clinical researchers. Health care systems, experienced investigators, a large population, cultural closeness to Western Europe, and comparatively lower costs make Eastern European countries attractive to pharmaceutical companies and global CROs.



It is clear that the business climate in Eastern Europe has changed dramatically during the past decade. Many Eastern European countries, including several former Soviet republics, have entered into the European Union and are now perceived as equals to Western European countries—some of their neighbors have not entered the EU yet.

The most important countries for clinical research from the first group are Poland and the Czech Republic. The clinical trials market is large there, and for many companies these two countries are part of the obligatory checklist for new study locations. According to CenterWatch,¹ in 2006 there were 29.7 clinical trials per million people in the Czech Republic and 8.7 per million in Poland.

From the second group (the non-EU Eastern European countries), Ukraine is worth everybody's attention. This country is a relative newcomer to the industry, but should be considered a potential country for clinical research development.

- Using Ukraine's geographic coordinates, the geographic center of Europe is located on Ukraine's territory, located near the Rahiv, Lviv region. The country borders Poland, Belarus, Russia, Moldova, and Hungary, and with an estimated population of more than 46 million² is first among the Central and Eastern European countries, except Russia (see Table 1)^{2,3}.

Medical and pharmaceutical sciences are widespread. There are 15 medical universities and academies, four medical faculties of classic universities, three academies of postgraduate medical education, and 33 scientific medical institutes. There are also many pharmaceutical companies located in Ukraine that meet GMP standards, and 18,000 drugs (with 3411 active pharmaceutical ingredients) registered in the country.⁴

Patient population

- The unique features of the Ukrainian medical care system help recruit patients for trials within a short time frame. Primary and specialist care is organized around large hospitals and covers a large population. The system has a centralized structure and vertical referral system, which means that principal investigators (who are at the top of the referral pyramid) can select patients from the

Country	Population (mill.)	Year (est.)
Belarus	10,200,000	2006
Bulgaria	8,200,000	2006
Czech Republic	10,500,000	2006
Poland	38,000,000	2006
Romania	22,000,000	2006
Slovakia	5,400,000	2006
Ukraine	46,000,000	2006
Uzbekistan	21,000,000	2006
Yemen	21,000,000	2006
Yugoslavia	10,000,000	2006

Table 1. Population figures for Eastern Europe.

regional population without any competition inside.

Often patients come from small cities to big centers for detailed diagnosis and treatment, which is advantageous for trials as well. Overall, more than 65% of inhabitants live in urban areas;² in other words, clinical trials have easy access to more than 30 million Ukrainians. There are 30.16 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants—whereas, there are 22.43 in Poland, 34.03 in France, 34.02 in Germany, and 13.92 in Turkey.⁵

There is no nationwide insurance system for health-related expense reimbursement in Ukraine. People need to pay out of their own pockets for treatment, and high-quality medications are rather expensive. Free of charge treatment guaranteed by the country's constitution and provided by most governmental hospitals is limited, uses generic drugs, and is often not up-to-date. Although there are some governmental and/or pharmaceutical company funded programs for certain types of diseases (e.g., cancer, HIV, tuberculosis, and cystic fibrosis), they do not cover the needs of the whole population.

Population by Country

Country	Population ^{2,3}	Year (est.)
Ukraine	46,741,084 includes 31,778,811 urban inhabitants	August 2006
Poland	38,536,869	July 2006
Romania	22,303,552	July 2006
Belarus	10,293,011	July 2006
Czech Republic	10,235,455	July 2006
Hungary	9,981,334	July 2006
Serbia	9,396,411	2002 census
Bulgaria	7,385,367	July 2006
Baltic countries	7,184,974	July 2006
Slovakia	5,439,448	July 2006
Croatia	4,494,749	July 2006
Moldova	4,466,706	July 2006

Table 1. Population figures for Eastern Europe.