Obituary: Pavlo Kovalchuk
Vinnysia is an ancient Ukrainian city, founded in the 14th century, located on the picturesque slopes of the river Southern Bug. The city is known for its cleanliness, numerous public parks, fountains and historical monuments, it won in the rating of the best cities for living in Ukraine in 2021.

July 14, at 10:13 a.m., the peaceful morning was suddenly disturbed, when air alert was announced in the Vinnysia region. Half an hour later, at 10:46, reports began to arrive about several explosions in the center of Vinnysia. Soon it became known that Vinnysia was attacked by the “Kalibr” cruise missiles launched by the russians invaders from a subma in Black Sea. A few of them hit civilian objects in the centum of the city. Among them was nine-storey “Yubileyniy” building. Many of the victims were inside the “Neuromed” private medical center, located on the first floor of a residential building. “Neuromed” had born the brunt of the blast, that killed its administrators, doctors and patients. The fire spread to the parking where about 50 cars were burnt. The fire and destruction were so significant that 90 rescuers arrived at the scene and began to search for people and to help them. Among the few people inside «Neuromed» who survived after the attack were two doctors: pediatric neurologist Pavlo Kovalchuk and neurologist Natalia Falstynska.

Later, being already at hospital in Poland, Pavlo was describing this terrible morning on his Facebook page:

“I was lucky to get out of the burning office (a separate book should probably be written about this), with the help of passers-by, I got to the Emergency Station, where I received anesthesia and was taken to the intensive care unit of the City Emergency Hospital No. 2, where I received first aid, soon I was transferred to the Burn intensive care unit of the Pyrogov Hospital.”

On the first day, the doctors examined Pavlo and started cooling and infusion therapy, in the evening of the same day, the first surgery was performed. The total area of burns was estimated as 70%, especially the front surface of the trunk, upper limbs and cornea were affected.

07/16/22 second surgery was performed, and in the morning he was transported by helicopter to Lviv.

On 07/19/22, Pavlo was sent from Lviv Burn Center by a group of paramedics together with his wife Yulia, to the border with Poland and from there by helicopter to Krakow. The Krakow Burn Center is one of the most powerful in Poland. Immediately after the arrival, Pavlo was operated again.

For a long time, Pavlo’s condition had been assessed as very serious, but stable, doctors continuously struggled with infectious complications and fluid loss due to burns. The struggle for life had been lasted for 20 days, but on 2.08.2022 Pavlo died.

Pasha (short name for Pavlo) was born in Vinnytsiya. He had a big friendly family. His passion for neurology started at school years, from the stories of his mother Anna – a doctor neurologist. At high school Pavlo was interested in evolution and biology of nervous system. Therefore, the choice of speciality was made early-pediatric neurology and neurosurgery. The years of studying on the pediatric faculty of Medical University were interesting, fun and gave him many real friends. Realizing the importance of deep knowledge, he spent a lot of time reading special medical literature.

Besides the medicine Pavlo had a wide field of interests: guitar and violin playing, singing, drawing, martial arts.

After obtaining his specialty, Pavlo worked as a neurosurgeon at the children’s regional hospital in Vinnytsia, and in 2019 he started to work at “Evidence” medical center. Later, he worked as a pediatric neurologist at private medical centers in Vinnysiya.

During the years of work, he perfectly studied English on his own, because he understood the importance of obtaining modern knowledge and sharing it with colleagues. He had always read and studied a lot, getting knowledge from modern sources based on principles of evidence-based medicine.

An important milestone in his development as a neurologist was participation the pediatric neurology Course of the British Association of Pediatric Neurologists.

Pavlo was a member of Ukrainian and international medical organizations: EPNS, Association of child neurologists of Ukraine, International Headache Society.

He took an active part both as a listener and as a speaker in regional and international conferences and workshops; organized and held two neurology conferences in 2017 and 2019; he became the author of the course “Fundamentals of Neurology” on the educational platform for Ukrainian pediatricians, conducted educational webinars and offline meetings both for the parents of his patients and for colleagues.

When the war began and provision with medication was close to collapse, Pavlo had joined the important work on providing children with epilepsy from all over Ukraine with anticonvulsant drugs that came as humanitarian aid. He organized a hub of anticonvulsant drugs in Vinnytsiya for children with epilepsy.

Some words of memories from his university friend: “Pasha was the central organ for our group organism, he was (how difficult it is to write “was”) and remains the heart, the one that united and allowed us to function sincerely and faithfully and to be Friends with great letter”.

Pavlo was one of the best young pediatric neurologists in Ukraine. He didn’t leave his workplace at the most difficult time for country and he was killed by russian invaders. He was only 35 years old.

Now his short but extremely bright life was cut, bursting like a shooting star …

We express our deepest condolences to family, friends and colleagues, we miss and long.

Pavlo, we will always remember you. Rest in peace.