

## Despite the Continuing War of Aggression by Russia, Kyiv (Ukraine) Hosted the Seventh Ophthalmic Hub

Sibylle Scholtz\*, Lee MacMorris and Achim Langenbacher

*Institute of Experimental Ophthalmology, Saarland University, Homburg/Saar, Germany*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Sibylle Scholtz, Institute of Experimental Ophthalmology, Saarland University, Homburg/Saar, Germany.

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*Figure*

If the Congress series “OphthalmicHUB” did not exist, it would need to be invented. If only to demonstrate how strong the Ukrainian ophthalmology community is in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the war with Russia. This year’s OphthalmicHUB 2024 is proof of the prioritization of progress and unstoppable development. Prof. Oksana Vitovska, who with great success, despite COVID or the Russian war of aggression, has held her “OphthalmicHUB” every year since 2018.



**Figure 1:** Prof. Oksana Vitovska opens OphthalmicHUB in a packed conference room.

This year's conference, held on October 25-26, the seventh in a row, showcased not only its innovative character but also its sustainability. Despite the pandemic, blackouts, shelling, and alarms, science continues to ignite the hearts of concerned Ukrainian and foreign doctors. Over 1,000 delegates attended the hybrid congress. There were presentations from more than 130 international and national speakers. They emphasized a multidisciplinary collaboration which proved not only the importance, but also the strength of the conference.

The scientific-practical conference was packed with information on the latest technology in medical and surgical techniques and products.



**Figure 2:** fltr: Prof Serdyuk Valeriy (head of ophthalmological department at Dnipro Medical University treating combat trauma), Dr. Svetlana Ustimenko (head of Dnipro Eye Hospital), Prof. Oksana Vitovska, Prof. Yulia Panchenko, Prof Sergyi Mogilevskiy (all from Kyiv).



**Figure 3:** Prof. Vitovska's core Team (fltr: Volodymyr Kuksenko (Kyiv), Dr. Elisabeth Baran (Chernigiv), Prof. Oksana Vitovska (Kyiv)).

OphthalmicHUB 2024 traditionally covers dozens of different topics and issues; however, this year's meeting particularly emphasized challenges posed by the war against Russian occupiers. One key section of the conference focused on combat trauma. In addition to evacuation stages and assistance skills important topics such as prosthetics and rehabilitation for victims were discussed. Work with patients should not end upon completion of treatment. The goal must be recovery—and that is impossible without quality rehabilitation.

There is an urgent need for training teachers to work with individuals who lost their sight in adulthood, yet another task facing the Ukrainian state. Ophthalmologists see themselves as part of this process. These and other painful yet relevant issues sparked intense discussions among all participants at OphthalmicHUB.

There were 24 scientific sections and five large-scale master classes, including the new, powerful “EyeRing” session titled “Focus on Knowledge.” This master class was a special highlight of OphthalmicHUB, it was designed as an interactive game for young scientists with varying levels of tasks and challenges. The goal of “EyeRing” was not only to disseminate knowledge but also to utilize an extraordinary format for presenting and exchanging knowledge. In advance, nine video questions from ophthalmology experts were prepared and then presented to the participants. During this master class, participants had not only to rely on their training but also on their logic, creativity, clinical thinking, and teamwork skills. The game was made more complex by unexpected plot twists in some questions, photo questions, and even pranks from the hosts.

Five major symposia showed the international and interdisciplinary set-up of the congress: a Neuro-Ophthalmology Symposium, the Ukrainian Glaucoma Society Symposium, the Ukrainian Ophthalmic Surgeons Union Symposium, the International Ophthalmology Symposium, as well as a satellite symposium covering insights in latest IOL technology sponsored by Johnson & Johnson.

It is essential to mention the multidisciplinary nature of the event. Since the human body is a complex coordinated mechanism and medicine is not an isolated process. Lectures from neurosurgeons, endocrinologists, maxillofacial surgeons, as well as lawyers and coaches were added benefits for ophthalmologists. After all, it is necessary to treat not just eyes but rather the “disease causes” for a specific individual. Collaboration with colleagues, patients, law enforcement, and one’s mental system is crucial. All this requires learning—and as we know well—it must continue throughout life.

As in every year, the industry exhibition presented the most modern medical equipment and pharmaceutical products. Attendees of OphthalmicHUB were able to try out the latest tools and were able to practice with the modern equipment throughout both conference days.

Among other innovative elements at OphthalmicHUB, a superb laser show became a highlight of the opening ceremony. This not only impressed the attending doctors, but it also confirmed the resilience of Ukrainian medicine. Ukrainians are keeping pace with time. They possess modern diagnostic and treatment methods. They look to the future. Aggressors cannot stop their development.

The congress in Kyiv concluded, leaving the participants with a profound sense of unity and inspiration. The discussions, lectures, and workshops demonstrated clearly that the ophthalmic community thrives not only on expertise but also on mutual support and passion. Armed with new ideas, strengthened connections, and the understanding that progress is possible even in difficult times, attendees return to their clinics and research institutions. Active discussions and friendly communication with like-minded individuals are significant advantages of in-person meetings. For Ukraine, it is essential to feel the solidarity while poignantly understanding that foreign colleagues, by joining the hybrid congress, have assured their Ukrainian colleagues that they are part of the global ophthalmology community. The high scientific level of OphthalmicHUB proved that not only Ukrainians need to learn, but can also pass along valuable knowledge to ophthalmologists worldwide.



**Figure 4:** Prof. Oksana Vitovska, National Medical University O.O. Bogomolec in Kyiv (Ukraine), Head of “Ukrainian Alliance of Ophthalmologists”, Head of scientific conference “Ophthalmic Hub”.

The spirit of Kyiv, defined by determination and hope, will continue to inspire as they strive to achieve excellence and turn the vision of improved eye care into reality. With this year’s Ophthalmic Hub Prof. Oksana Vitovska once again made congress history in Kyiv, and she and her team are ready to do so in 2025.

**Full congress on Youtube:**

- Ophtik Science <https://youtu.be/UEJegVyRcn8?si=JzjHAazp9fmFwGs8>.
- Master Ophtik: [https://www.youtube.com/live/dYW\\_FGuDuJk?si=sT1SGIS5\\_MBgJTIt](https://www.youtube.com/live/dYW_FGuDuJk?si=sT1SGIS5_MBgJTIt).
- Ophtik Especially: [https://www.youtube.com/live/xhNEkeoDLOA?si=wEvt-foTn10vMp\\_O](https://www.youtube.com/live/xhNEkeoDLOA?si=wEvt-foTn10vMp_O).

**More information:** <https://www.ophthalmic-hub.com.ua/en>.

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