Why do vaccinations scare the Kremenchuk community?

The amount of people in Kremenchuk who refuse vaccinations is growing

Nowadays vaccinations are the only way to control infections. International medicine has not invented any other way to prevent epidemics and pandemics of infectious diseases. Scheduled vaccinations are done in all developed European countries, which we Ukrainians look up to so much. Then, why have vaccinations scared Ukrainians so much in the last 10 years? And what are the reasons people in Kremenchuk refuse them?

The amount of parents that refuse to have preventative injections administered to their children is growing. According to the press service of the Regional State Administration in Poltava region, each year there are more and more “unvaccinated” children. In 2005 there were 520, 2006 – 721, and in 2008 – already 1,915.

On April 20-26, Kremenchuk hosted European Immunization Week. This event was initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO). It was thought that this event would have popularized the idea of vaccinations among the public. However, this intention did not play out. Kremenchuk medical workers are bothered by the increasing amount of “refusers.” In the city there are 59 children that did not receive planned vaccinations. Parents of 28 of them seem to be almost ready to agree to the injections. However, 30 more mothers would do it only “over their dead bodies.” Recently, one more mother joined them; this 31st mother is very against any vaccines, especially against Absorbent Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis (DTP).

Why is this so? Where does this panic come from? Kremenchuk medical workers, in interviews with Telegraf reporters, blamed everything on the ignorance and stubbornness of some parents, on propaganda against vaccines and on scandalous, but stupid publications in the press. After these words, Telegraf visited Children’s Clinic #1 on Thursdays for a couple weeks straight: on Thursdays it is parent’s day and many mothers with infants come on them. We asked the mothers about their personal attitude toward vaccinations. We did not get the impression that Kremenchuk mothers are superstitious at all; quite the opposite - they seemed to be quite conscientious and aware. Here are a couple of common answers:

Table illustrating the amount of parents refusing vaccinations in Poltava region
Mothers say…

**Alina**
- Oh, I am very scared of vaccinations because my niece had a very high fever after her vaccine. However, we do get injections for our baby since my mother says we have to! Otherwise my child can get sick, plus the child will not be accepted into a kindergarten.

**Sveta:**
- We are doing DTP and BCG (Bacillus Calmette-Guérin) of course since our country has a Tuberculosis epidemic! However, I do think that there is no need for a vaccination against heptatitis.

**Olena:**
- We are doing all the vaccinations since there is no other way to prevent a child from getting infected. Why would I expose my child to such a hazard?

**Anya:**
- We are doing all the obligatory vaccinations. However, I do not go to regular visits to the pediatrician in the clinic – she does her job only to get a tick in the registry – she didn’t even check the child carefully before the injection and said that we should do it even with a running nose.

**Albina:**
- We are doing vaccinations, but not all of them. For example, I know that there is no need for the hemophilia injection. They stopped giving it in America, but the vaccine was already produced and they need to give it away to somebody – and now they are injecting our kids.

**Oleksandra:**
- I think it is obligatory to do the vaccines. There are no epidemics since only 2% of people reject vaccines, but 95% still do it. However, if everybody refused vaccines, should we wait for a rubella epidemic?

Sad secret story of the DTP vaccine
Sign on the poster: Cholera/ People, get vaccinated against cholera. Death is helpless only against the vaccine!

Or how do horrible Kremenchuk legends appear

DTP (absorbent vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis) is given to children when they are 3, 4, 5 and 18 months old. Therefore mothers talk about it the most. They often complain that after this vaccine, children get very high fevers, diarrhea and other problems. In particular, we were most shocked by the extraordinary story of one father that visited Clinic #1. The man said that the DTP vaccine includes live microbes that “contaminate” children! He even went to the Kremenchuk City Sanitary-Epidemiological Station about this matter, where one of the officials responded to him that they were aware of these microbes but have to be silent since “Kyiv orders vaccinations to be done!” We were extremely shaken by this story, it sounded too dangerous. It resembles the old and evil Stalin-era “works of vermin doctors.” But the reality is a little different. Most important is that the microbes in the vaccine are dead!

As to the nature of the DTP vaccine, Telegraf received an adequate explanation from doctors. The most distinct and complete commentary was given by Professor Kramaryev, head infectionist at the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine:

- For active immunizations in Ukraine, they usually use the whole cell pertussis vaccine – first-phase suspension of the pertussis microbes, which are killed by formalin and/or merthiolate. This substance is used together with the diphtheria and tetanus anatoxins (together the DTP vaccine). It is well known that the DTP vaccine is the most reactogenic because of its whole cell pertussis component. In order to eliminate this drawback, a new generation vaccine was created with an acellular pertussis component - ADTP (Absorbent Acellular vaccine against Diphtheria Tetanus and Pertussis).
Pertussis. The vaccine is made in physiological solutions. It includes additives from two phenoxyethanol (vs. in DTP the additive is mercury salt).

[Medical Newspaper “Health of Ukraine” #4/1, March 2008]

We think that the phrase “first-phase suspension of the pertussis microbes” – so shocking and unclear to the scared public started all of the stories about the “live microbes” in vaccines. And the public did not read after that to get - “killed by formalin and/or merthiolate” since they were shocked by the first half of the sentence.

So, thank goodness the microbes are dead. But the problems with DTP are still critical.

Doctors agree that the DTP vaccine is the most reactogenic – it causes health problems in the majority of children. Those same doctors note the usefulness of ADTP. However, the old DTP is still massively used for the vaccination of children in Ukraine.

Telegraf reviewed the National Calendar of Vaccinations in Ukraine (order by the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine #48 from February 3, 2006, vaccination table by age). It clearly states that when a child turns three months old, it should get a DTP vaccination, at 4 months – DTP, five months – DTP, and only at 18 months should a child get ADTP. Why is this so? None of the Kremenchuk doctors that we talked to could give an official response to this. They all sent us to Kyiv. The aforementioned Order #48 from 2006, according to which all vaccinations are given does not include any explanation on the matter. But “specifications on the vaccination calendar in Ukraine (2006)” does have the statement: “It is an achievement that according to the new vaccination calendar, children with a high risk of developing post-vaccine complications should get vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis with ADTP, which includes the acellular pertussis component and is less reactogenic.” (L.I. Chernyshova, department of children’s infectious diseases and immunology, National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Studies named after P.L. Shupyk).

Wonderful, ladies and gentlemen! If ADTP is an achievement, then why isn’t it used en masse for all children? Doctors are not saying anything. Therefore, Telegraf is offering its own version, regardless the quality of the vaccines. In our opinion, the matter, as always, comes down to money. The cost of regular DTP is UAH 4.4, maximum – UAH 5.0. The cost of ADTP produced in Belgium is UAH 125-200. But medical care in Ukraine is free of charge. And vaccines should be free for citizens as well – with the state picking up the tab. It seems like our state is holding up the money. But ‘the state’ is too general of a notion. The decisions are made by the Ministry of Health Protection and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. These are the two divisions of government that make decisions about the vaccinations of Ukrainian children with a less reactogenic vaccine. But the Ministry of Health Protection does not provide imported vaccines in sufficient quantities and on time. Our next story is about that.

Foreign vaccines and the destruction of domestic producers
In Ukraine the majority of vaccines that are used are foreign-made. The National Vaccination Calendar includes vaccinations against 24 infectious diseases. Vaccinations against only five of them are made in Ukraine. According to the Budget Chamber of Ukraine, in 2006-2007, the Ministry of Health Protection spent 85.4% of budgeted money allocated for immunizations (UAH 162,766.8 and accordingly UAH 159,570.7 to purchase foreign vaccines). In 2008, the Ministry of Health Protection planned to use 87.8% of all budget allocations to purchase vaccines.
The Ukrainian parliament recognized that “Ukraine does not produce enough vaccines, serums, and other immunal-biological substances, thus creating a real threat to the country’s national security (Regulation #3339 from January 12, 2006).

Three years have past since, but the production of domestic vaccines has not increased. Out of three specialized enterprises in Ukraine that used to be very strong, only one functions normally – closed joint stock company “Bilik.” “Lvivlikpreparaty” does not produce anything anymore. The property of the Odesa Bacteriological Drug Enterprise was arrested in January 2008 and sold at auction to “Ukrspets’yust” (according to the Budget Chamber of Ukraine).

Why do vaccinations scare the Kremenchuk community?

“I was asked to transport the vaccine in a bottle with cold water!”

The Telegraf newsroom got a letter from a disgruntled mother of an 18-month-old baby. Here it is.

“Hello! My baby is 18-months-old. He did not have any counterindications and we were to get a DTP vaccination at Clinic #2. The day before the doctor’s visit, we got a call from our nurse that there were no vaccines in the clinic and that we needed to buy it ourselves from the pharmacy in Hospital #3. She told us about the conditions for transporting the medicine. She asked us to transport the vaccine in a bottle with cold water!

Having done some research on the Internet, I learned that there are very strict conditions for the preservation and transportation of the vaccine (the temperature must be 2-8 degrees Celsius and it
cannot be frozen). After long consultations with my doctor’s friends, I took a thermos with ice cubes and hung my vaccine in a bag within it. Thus, we successfully got our vaccination.

While in the pharmacy I asked about the producer of the vaccine, but the seller could not answer that question. Apparently I was the first one to ask them about it!

In the clinic, while I was waiting for the injection, I observed some cases in which some parents brought vaccines in their bare hands. Who needs such vaccinations? Moreover, in such a way they put all of the responsibility for vaccinations on parents’ shoulders. If something goes wrong, they can claim that the conditions for transportation were not met. How can we later blame parents for refusing to get vaccinations?! Especially since they are the only ones who seem to care about the health of their children!

The Ministry of Health Protection allows everything! … for additional money

When we read this letter, we were angry, just as our reader. How is it possible to carry a vaccine in a bottle with water?! Or in your hands?! Especially in such hot spring weather? Vaccines do change their characteristics when exposed to volatility in temperature and even light.

At first we wanted to run to Clinic#2 and reveal everything, but first we decided to sit down and read all of the norms and directive documents from the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine, including that same order #48, according to which vaccinations are conducted in Ukraine.

At first in the “Order on the provision of sufficient conditions for preserving and transporting immuno-biological medicines” we read a lot of information about a ‘cold-chain’ – a continuous system that provides the best possible conditions for the storage of vaccines. This is such a serious matter! According to the Ministry of Health Protection, there are only 5-10 minutes to unload a vaccine, God help taking longer because it can break the ‘cold-chain’! Pharmacies are even prohibited from storing vaccines in refrigerator doors! There, in the “Order…” are a lot of other strict requirements. However, after that, we read another order – the “Regulation on the sale of medical immuno-biological substances to the public.” It is also very interesting, especially point 6.2: “The vaccine can be sold to a buyer under the condition that the latter has a thermal container with a cold element (or thermos).” Probably in our Kremenchuk case, we should accept a bottle of cold water or a parent’s hands as a ‘thermal container?’ And why not? Since the Ministry of Health Protection does not provide a clear definition of a ‘thermal container’, and pharmacies, in turn, just sell the vaccines. Parents just buy them and take them in bottles, thermoses or in their hands – whatever they come up with. And the medical staff just injects them. So in this vaccination scheme, who will be able to tell for sure where the ‘cold-chain’ was broken or not provided? Or how it could have influenced the vaccine?

We did go to Clinic #2 to get more information.

“DTP is like water from the faucet…”

Mrs. Kirchyk, head of the pediatric division of Children’s Clinic #2, answered Telegraf’s questions.
- Olha Vitaliyivna, why do Kremenchuk mothers complain about their children’s reaction to the DTP vaccine?
- There are different vaccines. There is DTP and ADTP. The latter is newer and acellular. It is less reactogenic, which means that it is accepted by children’s bodies much easier. I often have to explain the difference between the vaccines to mothers and use the following analogy. The DTP vaccine is like water from the faucet; the water is allowed by state norms. The sanitary-epidemiological station has checked its quality, but we all understand that it is still far from ideal. Therefore, for people who have problems with kidneys or their stomach, we advise the use of filters on faucets. ADTP is like water from the faucet that has gone through additional filters. When our clinic has problems with the latter vaccine, we advise parents to buy it themselves. But they do not always choose to do so. The difference is in price – DTP costs UAH 4.4, while ADTP – about UAH 200.

- Isn’t it risky to trust parents, not the medical staff, to buy vaccines? Since there are very strict rules for storing and transporting vaccines?

- We do explain to parents that they have to bring a ‘cold element’ with them – it can be a plastic bottle with frozen water. The vaccine is transported in a bag inside of their bottle. Besides, a buyer receives a check from the pharmacy that states the time the vaccine was purchased. Within two hours of the purchase time, the vaccine should be in the clinic.

- One of our readers asks who will take responsibilities for complications caused by vaccines purchased in pharmacies? Since it is always easy to blame parents for violating transportation conditions.

- It is possible to blame just about anybody - the vaccine’s producer, parents, doctors, or the nurse that injected the vaccine. But in each particular case, right after a complication or abnormal reaction to a vaccine, according to Ministry of Health Protection Order #48, an urgent report is sent to the Sanitary-Epidemiological Station. Thus the case will be up for a detailed investigation by a specially-created committee. And the series of medications used for the injection will be temporarily (until the investigation is resolved) prohibited from being injected. We have seen how this law works in a Kramatorsk case.

- You allow parents to buy vaccines themselves because it is absent in the clinic? Is it allowed by law?

- Of course it is allowed by law. Here is Order #48 from the Ministry of Health Protection from February 03, 2006 where it states: “the sale of vaccines to the public is allowed at pharmacies at medical institutions with a doctor’s prescription.

“If not for the tenders!”

So dear reader, we found out who is the one that does not prohibit the transportation of vaccines by hand. Now we need to find out why Kremenchuk faces problems with vaccine supplies. Telegraf asked the head of the Sanitary-Epidemiological Department of the City’s Sanitary-Epidemiological Station, Mr. Vereshchak:

- Why does Kremenchuk face problems with vaccine supplies, such as for polio? Is there a shortage of them just like with ADTP?

- Here is how the procedure works. Each year in October-November, children’s clinics put together a vaccination plan for the next year. They send these plans to the City’s Sanitary-Epidemiological Station in November. Here there is a person responsible for it, for compiling it all together and making one plan for the entire city. We send it to the regional Sanitary-Epidemiological Station in November. The regional one in turn sends the region’s request to the Ministry of Health Protection.

- So if everything is calculated so well, why is there a shortage of vaccines?
- There are no shortages. Everything is just delayed, by 3-4 months, sometimes even half a year. For example, the day before yesterday, I brought 3,580 vaccines against polio to the city. Even though we were supposed to receive it back when the vaccination was supposed to be given according to the calendar along with DTP. It is all because of the tenders! If only they took place in December! But usually they take place in February-March. After that the supplier takes another 2-3 months to deliver the orders. This is how delays happen.
- Where do you use vaccines that have been delayed? Since parents already bought vaccines for their children on their own?
- Vaccines do not disappear. They are held for next year.
- But in this way there is a big savings to the state at the parent’s expense – they use their own money for so-called “free” immunizations?
- These questions should go somewhere else. Ask those who are on top.

“Through DTP vaccinations, they contaminated a child with Klebsiella”

The absence of regular and truthful information breeds different and often horrible rumors among the public. In Kremenchuk, for example, there is a story that children’s vaccinations can contaminate children with Klebsiella. One day, even a taxi driver told this to a Telegraf reporter. He had a really hard time curing his child from the disease – had to sell his house to pay for doctor services. The guy was sure that the infection was transferred to the child through a vaccination. Later, the father of a 1.5-year-old child came to Telegraf and said that last year, during DTP vaccination, when his child was 3-months old in Clinic #1, the child was infected with Klebsiella. According to the man, his child received a ‘bad’ vaccine. At first the nurse said that if he wants to get an injection with a better vaccine then he should pay UAH 2 more. The man gladly agreed and ran to pay, but there he was informed “it’s too late, daddy, your child was already vaccinated!” After the vaccination, their child had really high fever and diarrhea for a very long time, which later changed to constipation. Finally, at the age of six months, the baby was sent to the infectious department of the Children’s Hospital, where he was diagnosed with ‘a generalized form of Klebsiella.’ The man tried to search for the truth and find fault for a long time, but he could find and prove nothing. As he says, all the doctors stood up for each other. He trusts only one man – the head of the infectious department of the Children’s Hospital, Volodymyr Demyanovych Bondar, since this is the doctor that cured his child. So Telegraf decided to ask this particular doctor since he is not partial in the case about whether Klebsiella can get into the body from a vaccination.
- Volodymyr Demyanovych, how can a Klebsiella infection get into a child’s body?
- It’s a very complicated infection. The problem exists not only in Ukraine, but in the whole world. The infection can be transferred through the womb via the placenta. It can exist in the bodies of a child’s parents, but in a very small concentration that is not possible to be detected by tests. Even home pets can have Klebsiella.
- Can a child get infected with Klebsiella through DTP?
- Of course not! The infection cannot be transferred in such a way. A child could have a post-vaccine reaction such as high fever, etc – but they cannot get infected in such a way. Think for yourself: DTP is a vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis. It does not include any Klebsiella components. It is just that parents often decide that if something happened after the vaccination, then the reason for it was the injection. But such thinking is wrong.
VACCINATIONS – choose freedom from the illness

In the next issue you will read: Why do vaccines arrive in the regions half a year too late, how vaccines are certified in Ukraine, and why not only the Kremenchuk community but all Ukrainians are scared of vaccines.

What were 2,235 children vaccinated with?

Out of 32 vaccines, only 2 went through quality control in a laboratory

How are vaccines registered in Ukraine? Why is it impossible to prove that a child’s health got worse due to post-vaccine complications? Why is there a shortage of vaccines and why do parents have to buy them at their own expense?
In the last Telegraf issue, we shared our view on why vaccinations scare Kremenchuk citizens (Telegraf #22, Why do vaccinations scare the Kremenchuk community?). We think that you, just as us, understand that the reason for all the problems is not just a matter of Kremenchuk doctors. The reason is hidden much deeper. Telegraf has its own view that the system of vaccinations in Ukraine is the reason for numerous refusals, post-vaccination complications, and massive distrust of Ukrainians of immunizations. But how can we prove it? Usually, journalists, when doing stories about immunizations, limit themselves to a single tragic case. Last week such a story came up on a Ukrainian TV channel. Viewers were shown a small child’s tomb and crying parents, who said that their child died because of a vaccination. Soon afterward, a rebuttal from doctors came up, and that was it. The story was over, just as all the others. Therefore, Telegraf intends to find a state institution whose comments doctors would not be able to just playfully refute. We found such an institution.

In 2008, after the tragic death of an upperclassman in Kramatorsk after a vaccination, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine ordered the Budget Chamber of Ukraine to conduct an audit of the activities of the Ministry of Health Protection in the sphere of immunization of the population. The audit was conducted, but its results did not get into the press, neither were they made public. We think that the results of the audit, as well as the documents of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Health Protection that Telegraf was able to find prove our theory – it is not the vaccine that’s bad, it’s the system of its organization in Ukraine that is faulty. The problem is not that the vaccines are ‘bad’ or that they were being ‘experimented’ on. The problem is that the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine does not provide strict and consecutive laboratory control of the vaccine series that are used in Ukraine according to the national vaccination calendar, and the public does not know anything for sure, but as always smells danger in the air.

**Why don’t vaccinations in Ukraine go through laboratory control?**

According to World Health Organization recommendations, medical immuno-biological medications should be checked for safety before mass use in the country. WHO recommends conducting obligatory clinical-epidemiological testing of the medications. Let’s look at what is happening in Ukraine. Let’s take one of the most popular vaccines against tuberculosis – BCG SSI (Denmark). The permanent tender committee of the Ministry of Health Protection, according to the buying procedure, purchased from one of the participants – closed joint stock company “Ganza” 164 ths doses of the BSG SSI vaccine (committee decision from December 05, 2007). In its technical-economic explanations for this purchase, it states that starting from 2008, Ukrainian babies will be vaccinated with BSG SSI. Basically it means that this is a regulation for an order for the mass immunization of little Ukrainians. At the same time, the Ministry of Health Protection does not have documents stating that it carried out clinical-epidemiological research or tests of the BSG SSI vaccine in Ukraine. If there are no documents, that means there were no tests done.

**How are vaccines registered in Ukraine?**

Why do Ukrainians ignore the safety rules and recommendations from the World Health Organization and did not conduct clinical-epidemiological tests on the vaccine ratified for the mass immunization of little Ukrainians? Because this research was not required by Ukrainian legislation. The BSG SSI vaccine received state registration in Ukraine back in 2005 (certificate from February 23, 2005). According to the regulations on state registration at that time (Ministry of Health Protection
Order #486 from January 15, 2001), in order to register a foreign produced vaccine, no documents about clinical research on the reactogenic qualities of the vaccine were necessary. Weird rules, aren’t they? Due to such strange rules for state registration, out of the 32 vaccines that are used for mandatory immunizations, only three went through laboratory quality control testing.

**Immunizations that underwent laboratory control:**
- **2002** – vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (ADTP, Belgium)
- **2005** – vaccine against Hepatitis B (closed joint stock company “Biolik”, Kharkiv)
- **2007** – vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis and hemophilia infections (TETRAkt-HIB, France)

The other 29 vaccines from eight producers did not undergo laboratory quality control when being registered in Ukraine. The quality parameters were accepted based on reports provided by the producers.

**What does the “Center” do?**

Formally, there is an institution in Ukraine whose direct responsibility is to regularly select samples from vaccine series and conduct examinations. This expert institution is called state “Center for Immuno-biological Medicine,” which exists as part of the Ministry of Health Protection. The Ministry of Health Protection (Order #486 from January 15, 2001), back in 2001, put the responsibilities on the “Center…” to test vaccines. There is one problem – the lab equipment necessary for testing vaccines, was purchased by the “Center…” only in 2007. Moreover, this super-doooper Ukrainian laboratory was not accredited as of April 2008. So the “Center…” has been conducting selective control of vaccine quality from foreign producers according to reports by the same producers, but not by laboratory examination.

In 2002-2007, 497 series of vaccines entered Ukraine for the mandatory vaccination of children. Laboratory control by the “Center…” was done only for 105 series, 21.2% of the whole. Moreover, half of those (53 series) were tested in the laboratory in 2007 alone. So what was happening before that? It’s probably better not to even think about vaccines between 2002 and 2006, since nowadays there is no way to trace any of them. There were no laboratory test results.

**It is impossible to find out the reasons for post-vaccine complications**

Now we are approaching the most painful topic – post-vaccine complications in children. Mothers include high fever, cancer, paralysis and everything else as post-vaccine complications. For example, the mother of Katya states that her child walks badly because of an immunization. Post-vaccine complications are difficult and permanent health disorders caused by using immuno-biological medicines (Article 1 of the Order of Ukraine “On the Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases”). However, in Ukraine, it is almost impossible to prove that a child’s health complications are the result of using a vaccine of inferior quality. In some countries, it is possible. For example, after two Japanese babies died within 24 hours, the official medical authorities in Japan recognized that the reason for the deaths was a reaction to the whole-cell pertussis component in a DTP vaccination.
In 2007, in Kharkiv region and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, 2,235 children received an injection against Hepatitis B, measles rubella, and parotiditis by a vaccine on which the “Center for Immuno-biological Medicines” has no information at all. There are no archived samples of the vaccine series either, even though all samples have to be preserved for laboratory control in case of post-vaccine complications.

In Ukraine, from 1998-2002, 119 cases of post-vaccine complications were registered, 84% of which were encephalitic reactions after immunization by DTP (“Monitoring the Safety of the Vaccines Used in Ukraine,” by doctor of medical sciences O.Polishchuk, V. Vasylyeva, Center for Immuno-biological Medicines). But which of these parents had official proof that this was from the immunization? We didn’t find any. What we did find is an explanation for why it is so hard to find the real reasons for post-vaccine complications.

According to the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine, in 2003-2007, 38 cases of post-vaccine complications were registered in children using vaccines from closed JSC “Biolik” (Kharkiv). Of course, the first question that came to mind is – what was the vaccine? The answer is – nobody knows what that vaccine was. Since, as you remember, the quality control of the vaccine series was supposed to be done by the state company “Center for Immuno-biological Medicines.” But the quality control of 16 vaccine series (out of 38) was conducted according to reports by the producers – meaning that no lab tests on samples were done. And the quality control of the other 22 series the “Center…” did not do at all. The Center’s director, Miss Moysyeyeva, explained that the legislation at the time did not require it.

During the same period, 2003-2007, 134 cases of post-vaccine complications in children were registered after using foreign produced vaccines. The laboratory control of those vaccines was not done by the center either.

So how can one prove in this case that a child, being healthy up until yesterday, got sick because of a vaccination of substandard quality? How can anyone do it if the documents on the lab tests on the same vaccine series do not exist in Ukraine? All you will get in return is a cold look from doctors and an ironically intoned question – “How can you know that this is the reason? You are not a doctor.” Yes, we are not doctors - that’s why our Ministry of Health Protection is sure that its brutal secrets will not be revealed or proven.

(According to material from the “Audit of the Use of State Budget Costs allocated to the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine to conduct public immunizations, Budget Chamber of Ukraine, 2008)
for so many years? How can they motivate the existence of this “Center for Immuno-biological Medicines” that did not even have equipment up until 2007 and is still not accredited?

In one state institution, we found the Ministry’s official response – letter #13-15/24 (from June 17, 2008). It was signed by the Acting First Deputy of the Ministry, Chief Sanitary Doctor of Ukraine A.M. Ponomarenko. Mr. Ponomarenko said that clinical research on vaccine quality must be conducted according to Order #90 (from February 21, 2008) from the Ministry of Health Protection. At the same time, the acting deputy explained that the BSG SSI vaccine (Denmark) that is used to vaccinate newborn Ukrainian babies did not undergo clinical testing in Ukraine since at the time of the vaccine’s state registration there was no law requiring documents about the clinical testing of vaccines made by foreign producers.

Similar information was provided by Mr. Ponomarenko about the vaccine Pentaxim (France). It was registered in Ukraine back in 2003 and at that time the law did not require any tests on imported vaccines for registration in Ukraine. From 2003 to 2006, the Pentaxim vaccine was used only in the private sector in Ukraine, but since 2006 it was included on the National Calendar on Preventative Immunizations. No information about quality testing done on this vaccine in 2006 is available. Also, the letter from the acting deputy minister does not include any comments about the vaccination given to 2,235 children in Kharkiv region and Crimea. Neither does it explain why the “Center for Immuno-biological Medicines” does not have any archived samples of that vaccine. Such is the letter. Out in the open, such documents are brutally cold write-offs. However, if the Ministry is ready to provide a more specific explanation, Telegraf will gladly print it.

We found one more letter from the acting deputy minister in which he complains to another state institution about the Verkhovna Rada, which had not yet looked at changes to the Law of Ukraine “On the Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases!” Those changes include information about the obligatory laboratory and clinical-epidemiological tests on vaccines imported to Ukraine.

What lazy bones are sitting in the Verkhovna Rada! The nation’s immunity is in danger and our MPs are striking because Minister Lutsenko does not know how to drink alcohol abroad.

**Why do vaccines get to the regions with delays and in insufficient qualities?**

Our colleague shared a story that her daughter received a complex immunization against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis without the pertussis components. Later, when the girl had become a teenager and got sick with pertussis, and it contaminated the entire family, which suffered severely from it – the clinic explained that at the time of vaccination, there was no vaccine against pertussis.

This spring, many little Kremenchuk citizens did not get vaccinations against polio on time because the medicine for injections arrived several months late. The head of the epidemiological department of the Kremenchuk Sanitary Epidemiological Station brought it only last week – 3,580 dozes. Now they will give this vaccination additionally, even though it was supposed to be given as part of the complex-injection. Our readers also complain that many of them had to buy the very expensive imported ADTP-HIB-IPV for the vaccination of their 4-5-month-old babies. Telegraf found a couple of explanations for what is going on in the country.
The Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine announced that due to insufficient financing, in 2008 the amount of ADTP-HIB-IPV vaccinations was lowered by 143 ths dozes (out of 593 ths planned). As you can understand, these 143 ths dozes had to be bought by Ukrainian parents. In other cases, parents refused vaccinations altogether and their child was not immunized since the government held up money for the immunization of the population by modern vaccines.

And here is why the vaccines get to the regions much later; it was figured out by the auditors at the Budget Chamber. As it appears, the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine allows their suppliers to work on large delays. For example, “Interfarm” Ltd, CJSC “Biolik”, “TRI-Central Pharmacy Stock” Ltd, and “Tri” Ltd were supplying vaccines not within 90 calendar days of payment, as foreseen in the law, but within 100-165 days. Therefore, the shipments were half a year late.

Therefore, a big question appears: who does the Ministry of Health Protection favor? Why does the Ministry allow suppliers to break deadlines? Such actions by a state institution show characteristics of crediting commercial structures at the cost of the government’s budget. Such things are usually done for certain rewards.

The vaccination program does not exist!

During the entire time we investigated the matter of vaccinations, one issue kept bothering us – Ministry of Health Protection Order #48 from February 03, 2006. The vaccination of the Ukrainian population is conducted according to this order. The National Vaccination Calendar also dates back to 2006. We thought it was abnormal, since it is already 2009, and the vaccination calendar is from 2006. We asked the question – why? No Kremenchuk doctors could explain. So we started searching for answers ourself.

At first, we found the regulation from the Cabinet of Ministers #462-r from August 03, 2006 “On Approving the Concept of the entire-country Immunization Program and Population’s Protection against infectious diseases for 2007-2015.” This regulation was signed by Prime Minister Yekhanurov. The document is extremely nice. When reading it, one might think that the document was compiled in a developed European country! It even presumes the creation of a clinical center that would investigate reasons for post-vaccine complications. We started looking for this wonderful whole-country program of immunizations for 2007-2015. But we didn’t find it.

Among the registered documents of the Ministry of Health Protection, Ministry of Justice and Cabinet of Ministers, no such program exists. Finally, Telegraf received a document that destroyed all of our last hopes about the adequacy of the Ukrainian government. This document is a letter from the Ministry of Health Protection to the Cabinet of Ministers (#05.0206/1422 from November 25, 2008).
In this letter, the Ministry of Health Protection asks to push the deadline for submitting the “Whole-Country Program of Immunization for 2007-2015” to the Cabinet of Ministers back to January 2009.

This means that the program, according to which Ukraine had to have been fighting infectious diseases is still not ratified. Therefore, this means that it has not been financed either. Listen, how can sentimental weeks of vaccinations by the World Health Organization help a country whose government was not even able to ratify and finance an immunization program? This could not be called a fight against infectious diseases; it looks more like an amateur play.

This is also why vaccinations in our country are conducted according to an order that dates back to 2006. Because in 2002-2006, the relevant state program on immunizations existed. Its term elapsed, but a new program was not ratified. This is how the Cabinet of Ministers and Ministry of Health Protection fights epidemiological diseases.

**Throwing an MP into a fight**

What can we do? We are not planning on just blaming the government and doctors. We have a better solution – let our MPs work. Since Kremenchuk has its own representative in parliament – Mr. Babayev. He, as well, sits in the same party as the Prime Minister of Ukraine; they are both from BYuT. Why can’t he talk to the prime minister party-friend to party-friend: “M’am, will you finally ratify that immunization program because the nation’s immunity is in danger? And you have elections coming up!” Moreover, we suggest the Kremenchuk MP initiate a parliamentary hearing into the urgent matter. What do we need?

- We need the Verkhovna Rada to finally hear the changes to the law “On the Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases” which suggests improvements to the procedure of registering vaccines in our country
- It is necessary for the Cabinet of Ministers to ratify and finance the whole-country program of the population’s immunization for 2007-2015, at least in 2009.

The MP has enough rights and power to submit the relevant requests and addresses to the specialized committees in the Verkhovna Rada, to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Health Protection of Ukraine. So why won’t he do it? These are all real actions. Since “mortal people” cannot push the matter – “mortal people” are only used for photographs with the prime minister that can be labeled, “Yulia Tymoshenko carefully listens to regular unvaccinated Ukrainians.” Overall, if neither the Cabinet of Ministers, nor the Ministry of Health Protection, nor the Rada are interested in normalizing the immunization process in Ukraine, then somebody else has to do it. But that somebody else has to have enough power. Why not the Kremenchuk MP?

**Larysa Artemenko**