

1 **Title:** A Medical Student's Volunteering Experience During the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War

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- 22
- 23 1. Medical student's role in a war
- 24 2. What can a medical student learn in a hospital during a war?
- 25 3. How medical student can help to soldiers?
- 26 4. Volunteering in a hospital during the pandemic and war
- 27 5. Medical students should be ready to work with a team during the affairs.

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1 **THE EXPERIENCE.**

2
3 War is always a damaging situation for the parties involved; no matter which one wins at the end, there is always
4 something to lose, such as soldiers, money, and the nation's safety.

5
6 Due to the pandemic, we could not attend our university in Ankara, Turkey, between the march of 2020 and
7 January of 2021. Like many other universities in the world, classes in my university also turned online because
8 of the pandemic. I was confronted with the pandemic's difficulties, like the uncertainty of the period and the
9 quality of distance learning.^{1,2} I was in my home country (Azerbaijan, located in Caucasus region, in the coasts
10 of Caspian Sea) and was attending online classes and having my routine study day. On the 27th of September
11 2020, we heard a war started between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the western side of Azerbaijan called the
12 Nagorno-Karabakh region, a mountainous and forested region located in the south Caucasus.³ It was a
13 tremendous war with more than a hundred thousand military personnel attending on both sides.

14
15 The soldier recruitment nationally started on the same date. The news from the war was not good for both sides;
16 there were too many dead and injured soldiers each day. Hundreds of wounded soldiers were brought to nearby
17 hospitals, and there was a need for extra medical personnel. I applied to several authorities as a volunteer to
18 help the personnel for medical care to wounded soldiers; in the end, I was able to go to Salyan Central Hospital
19 in Salyan (150km away from the war zone). In the meantime, televisions announced news regarding the end of
20 the conflict. However, the number of injured soldiers was increasing on a large scale every day.

21
22 Since the hospital where I was volunteering was not at the war zone, the soldiers were sent there from the field
23 hospitals after the first aid was applied. I was assigned with the team of doctors to apply tasks that given by the
24 hospital administration. I was helping with the admission of soldiers to hospital rooms, primary surgical treatment
25 like suturing, bandage change, and physical examination. I saw different types of injured soldiers; they mostly
26 came with extremity wounds, trunk wounds, and concussions due to explosions. I was mainly affected by the
27 soldiers who had concussions. They were in a strange condition; they could barely talk, comprehend, or walk.
28 Most of them even did not know where they were and what happened exactly. I had an opportunity to talk with
29 some of the soldiers, and their thoughts were touching; most of them wanted to go back to war and help their
30 companions despite their health conditions. While watching their medical conditions, I felt sorrow and despair
31 as many of them would live with the psychological and physical effects of the war.

32
33 It was an exhausting period as COVID-19 was worsening the situation in hospitals, and no one knew when the
34 war would end. The number of cases was increasing day by day. So many of the doctors were in a fight with
35 COVID, and some of them were infected and could not work. The situation was complicated as doctor absence
36 was present, and the help of medical students was necessary for hospitals. Moreover, the patient overload in
37 hospitals increased the risk of infection spread.

38
39 Despite the fear of the pandemic, we were working day and night with our best. Ambulances were transporting
40 the soldiers to nearby hospitals from the war zone, doctors were giving their best to cure the injured soldiers,
41 hospital personnel was making every effort to help, and medical students like me were giving our best in every

1 possible situation within the hospitals. I have experienced that in a war situation, the body's resistance increases
2 against the exhaust.

3
4 The war took nearly two months and ended on the 10th of November 2020; it cost more than 6500 lives in total
5 from both sides.^{4,5} I had an exceptional experience during that time. No matter how the war was an unfavorable
6 event during the pandemic, I have learned how to work under time and emotional pressure at the very early
7 stages of my life. Moreover, working in a team to deliver the best practice was another significant experience I
8 have gained during the war. Therefore, I can advise medical students that they should feel ready to help in
9 emergency situations like a war in case of need, as your help may be more important than you thought.

10
11 In conclusion, the war period was one of great triumph and sadness. Wounded and dead soldiers from both
12 sides were the black side of the war, which influenced both nations. As many of the doctors were in a fight with
13 COVID-19, in this doctor absence and patient overload, the help of medical students was crucial during the war
14 period. That experience of mine shows that medical students can also take a significant role during the war in
15 healthcare. Volunteering in a hospital during the war was a strange experience and feeling that will last a lifetime
16 on my memory.

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