

## Evolution of Reforming the Health Care System and the Market of Medical Services

Anastasiia Barzylovykh  <sup>1</sup> \*

<sup>1</sup> *Biology and Medicine Institute Science Educational Center of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Ukraine). Associate Professor at the Departments of Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Doctor of Science in Public Administration, Candidate of Medical Sciences.*

\* **Corresponding Author**, e-mail: [a.barzylovykh@gmail.com](mailto:a.barzylovykh@gmail.com)

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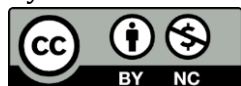
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### ABSTRACT

The article studies the evolution of reforming the health care system of Ukraine and the transformation of the national market of medical services in the period of independence and further socio-economic changes. Particular attention is paid to the transition from the centralized Semashko model to a modern system based on the principles of state financial guarantees, contracting of medical services and strengthening the role of public procurement. The main stages of reforming the healthcare system, which include the initial post-Soviet period, the stage of fragmentary changes, pilot reform projects, the institutional design of the new model, and the current stage of systematic implementation of the medical guarantee program, are summarized. The paper analyzes the scientific approaches of domestic and foreign researchers on the regulation of health care systems, financial mechanisms, competition in the market of medical services and the impact of state policy on the quality and accessibility of medical care. It has been established that despite significant progress in the regulatory and legal support of the reform, the effectiveness of its practical implementation remains limited due to insufficient funding, uneven access to medical services, institutional weakness of the system and the complexity of tariff regulation. The influence of external factors, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and armed aggression, which significantly transformed the conditions for the functioning of the health care system and actualized the need to increase its resilience, is considered separately. The need for further improvement of the mechanisms of public administration and development of the market of medical services on the basis of efficiency, accessibility and transparency has been substantiated.



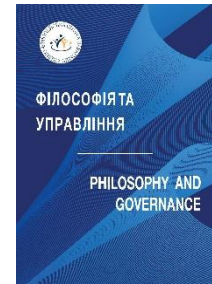
### KEYWORDS

public administration, state policy, mechanisms of public administration, healthcare, medical services, healthcare system, healthcare reform, healthcare system management, medical infrastructure



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## Еволюція реформування системи охорони здоров'я та ринку медичних послуг

Анастасія Д. Барзилович  1 \*

<sup>1</sup> Навчально-науковий центр «Інститут біології та медицини» Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка (Україна). Доцент кафедри педіатрії, акушерства та гінекології, д-р держ. упр., канд. мед. наук.

\* Автор-кореспондент, e-mail: [a.barzylovych@gmail.com](mailto:a.barzylovych@gmail.com)

| СТАТТЯ   | АНОТАЦІЯ  |
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| <p><b>Дослідницька</b></p> <p><b>DOI:</b><br/><a href="https://doi.org/10.70651/3041-248X/2026.2.10">10.70651/3041-248X/2026.2.10</a></p> <p><b>Отримана:</b><br/>08.01.2026 р.</p> <p><b>Прийнята:</b><br/>10.02.2026 р.</p> <p><b>Опублікована:</b><br/>14.02.2026 р.</p> <p><b>Авторське право</b> © 2026</p>  <p>автора<br/>Цей твір ліцензовано на умовах Ліцензії Creative Commons «Із Зазначенням Авторства – Некомерційна 4.0 Міжнародна» (CC BY-NC 4.0).</p> | <p>У статті досліджено еволюцію реформування системи охорони здоров'я України та трансформацію національного ринку медичних послуг у період становлення незалежності та подальших соціально-економічних змін. Особливу увагу приділено переходу від централізованої моделі Семашка до сучасної системи, заснованої на принципах державних фінансових гарантій, контрактування медичних послуг та посилення ролі державного закупівельника. Узагальнено основні етапи реформування системи охорони здоров'я, які включають початковий пострадянський період, етап фрагментарних змін, пілотні проекти реформ, інституційне оформлення нової моделі та сучасний етап системного впровадження програми медичних гарантій. У роботі проаналізовано наукові підходи вітчизняних і зарубіжних дослідників щодо регулювання систем охорони здоров'я, фінансових механізмів, конкуренції на ринку медичних послуг та впливу державної політики на якість і доступність медичної допомоги. Встановлено, що попри значний прогрес у нормативно-правовому забезпеченні реформи, ефективність її практичної реалізації залишається обмеженою через недостатнє фінансування, нерівномірність доступу до медичних послуг, інституційну слабкість системи та складність тарифного регулювання. Окремо розглянуто вплив зовнішніх чинників, зокрема пандемії COVID-19 та збройної агресії, які суттєво трансформували умови функціонування системи охорони здоров'я та актуалізували потребу підвищення її стійкості. Обґрунтовано необхідність подальшого удосконалення механізмів державного управління та розвитку ринку медичних послуг на засадах ефективності, доступності та прозорості.</p> |



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

публічне управління, державна політика, механізми державного управління, охорона здоров'я, медичні послуги, система охорони здоров'я, медична реформа, управління системою охорони здоров'я, медична інфраструктура

## 1. Introduction

Ensuring high standards of health care throughout the entire period of Ukraine's independence is one of the priority areas for the implementation of socio-economic policy in the field of health care. Achieving the desired benchmarks implies the formation of an effective long-term national strategy of health care policy and strict adherence to its main provisions, since the model of the health care system of the USSR (Semashko model) was characterized by a high degree of centralization and the introduction of social medical security and, at the same time, was unable to provide the principles of flexibility and did not meet the requirements of the market economy.

Under such conditions, the need to reform the entire health care system, which provides for the reorganization of managerial functions, changes in approaches to financing and updating the principles of the provision of medical services and medical care, turned out to be quite justified, because the changes that took place before were of a thesis nature and did not affect the effectiveness of the national health care system, and also did not take into account the impact of such factors on the existing situation as the effectiveness of the bodies state power, the effectiveness of decentralized governance, the rationality of the financing system, the development of the medical services market, patient satisfaction and the influence of political factors. At the same time, the process of transferring the authority to manage the health care system to the regional level turned out to be quite dangerous, as a result of which the crisis phenomena deepened even more due to the insufficiency of funding for the health care sector and the chronic shortage of necessary resources.

It is obvious that the path of transformational restructuring of Ukraine is still unfinished, and the existing problems are constantly deepened by the emergence of new modern destabilizing factors. Of great importance in the national health care system is ensuring the efficiency of the development and functioning of the medical services market, which is characterized as a complex system of medical services provision that combines state, regional and private components. Throughout the entire period of its existence, the market of medical services in Ukraine has been subjected to destructive changes and the negative impact of external and internal environmental factors, as a result of which critical and crises in the field of health care have repeatedly necessitated and actualized the need for their reform. However, despite all the measures implemented, the desired results were not achieved, and the crisis of the domestic health care system continues to deepen due to the long-term aggravation of economic, political and social problems.

The problem of the need to reform the health care system is the object of active discussions by scientists and practitioners at various levels of management, and proposals for improving the system of its management and improving the medical, socio-economic and scientific-educational components are expressed in countless program documents and plans for the implementation of measures. However, it should be stated that the indicators of the effectiveness of such activities do not indicate positive changes, and the existing problems regarding the inconsistency of the current model of the functioning of the medical services market do not meet the modern needs of improving the level and quality of life of the population and guaranteeing them proper medical protection. Moreover, the existing deformations of the structure of medical services have deepened even more, as a result of which the problem of inefficiency in the use of available resources is exacerbated. Another equally important factor is the low quality of medical services and insufficient funding of the health care sector.

## 2. Literature Review

The issue of state regulation of the health care system and the implementation of the program of medical guarantees is widely studied in domestic and foreign scientific literature. Ukrainian researchers focus on the transformation of financial mechanisms of the health care system, in particular, the transition from the maintenance of institutions to payment for medical services [6; 15]. A significant part of the work is devoted to the role of the National Health Service of Ukraine as a key purchaser of medical services [7], as well as to the problems of tariff formation and financing efficiency [8].

Foreign studies emphasize the importance of regulatory mechanisms and competition in the field of health care [4; 12], as well as the impact of public policy on the availability and quality of medical services in countries with different income levels [2]. Special attention is paid to the efficiency of financing systems and the share of public expenditures in GDP [10; 14]. Studies also confirm that the quality of medical services directly affects patient satisfaction [1; 11].

A generalization of the literature shows that despite a significant number of studies, the issues of effectiveness of the practical implementation of medical reform in Ukraine remain insufficiently disclosed, especially at the level of interaction between the state, service providers and patients.

### **3. Problem Statement**

Despite the implementation of the program of medical guarantees and the creation of a new model of financing the health care system in Ukraine, several systemic problems remain that reduce its effectiveness, in particular, uneven access to medical services, limited financial resources, insufficient institutional capacity of health care institutions and the complexity of tariff regulation. In addition, there is a gap between the declared principles of the reform and their practical implementation on the ground, which requires further analysis of public administration mechanisms and assessment of the effectiveness of the new financing model. The purpose of the study is to analyze the features of the implementation of the program of medical guarantees in Ukraine, to assess the effectiveness of mechanisms of state financing of the health care system and to identify the main problems of its practical implementation.

### **4. Methods and Materials**

The study uses a set of general scientific and special methods: analysis and synthesis – to generalize the regulatory framework and scientific sources; a systematic approach – to consider the health care system as an integral structure; comparative method – to compare Ukrainian and foreign experience in financing medicine; as well as content analysis of regulations and statistics on the functioning of the medical guarantee program. The information base of the study was legislative acts of Ukraine, data of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the National Health Service of Ukraine, the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as scientific publications of domestic and foreign authors.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

In general, assessing the entire period of development of the national health care system and changes in the market of medical services, it is possible to single out certain stages of such transformations, which should be systematized in Figure 1.

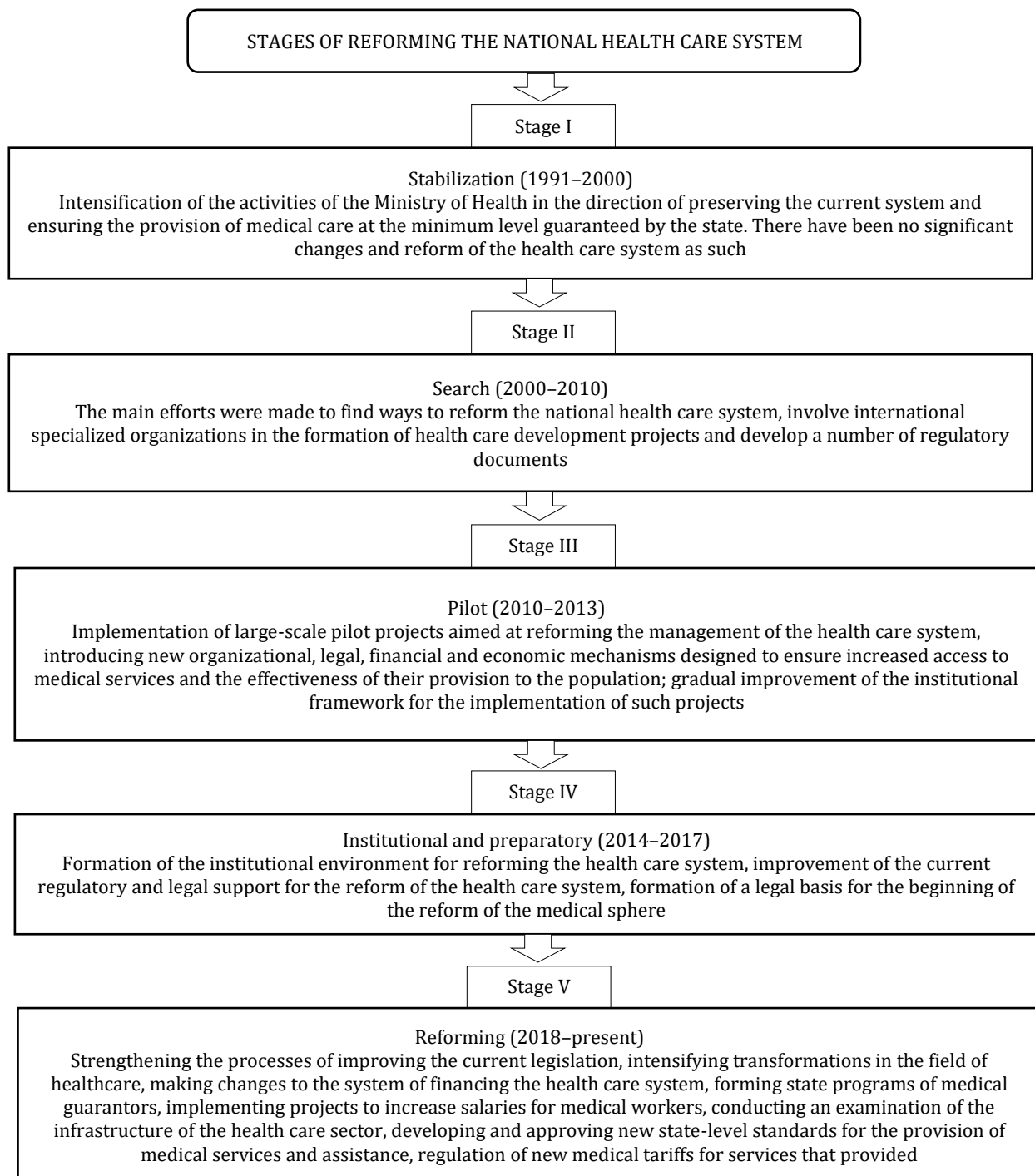
At the same time, during the period of Ukraine's development, five main stages of changes and reform of the health care system and the national market of medical services can be distinguished, each of which has certain features.

The first stage of development of the medical services market of Ukraine corresponds to the period of preservation of the existing health care system and ensuring the minimum parameters of medical care and social guarantees of health care.

At the second stage, the main vectors of reforming the health care sector in general and the medical services market in particular were formed, as a result of which the formation and testing of the main mechanisms of the envisaged reform were observed. It is worth noting the active participation in this process of such international organizations as the World Bank and the European Commission, with the help of which activities on the types and selection of instruments for the provision of medical services were coordinated. However, it should be noted that the reforms carried out at that time were fragmentary and were mainly local, and the emphasis was placed on:

- 1) search for additional sources of funding;
- 2) introduction of new methods of financing health care institutions at the level of primary medicine;
- 3) automation of medical service providers through experimental research;
- 4) carrying out structural and functional transformations of the medical care system;
- 5) reforming primary health care in the direction of intensifying the development of family medicine;
- 6) increased attention to the development of inpatient substitution forms of medical services, their regionalization;

7) implementation of a set of measures to improve the quality of medical care through the introduction of special standards for the provision of medical services, licensing and accreditation of medical institutions.



**Figure 1. Stages of Reforming the National Health Care System**

Source: [13, pp. 213–217].

The third stage envisaged large-scale implementation of the reform in certain pilot regions (Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk regions), which were identified as experimental platforms for reforming the health care system. The effectiveness of such a pilot reform is evidenced by the proven expediency:

- 1) differentiation of primary and secondary medical care based on the functioning of the general practice of family medicine;
- 2) creation of primary health care centers, which provide for an extensive network of outpatient clinics;

- 3) combining different sources of funding for emergency and secondary medical care at the regional level;
- 4) formation of a system for routing patients to medical institutions specializing in the treatment of serious and complex diseases;
- 5) creation of medical institutions of intensive care in the form of leading institutions of hospital districts;
- 6) introduction of a remuneration system built based on compliance with the amount of payment for the quality of work performed;
- 7) formation of a system of state regulation of prices for medicines.

The fourth stage fell on the period of the Revolution of Dignity and the beginning of Ukraine's military confrontation with the military aggression of the Russian Federation and continued until 2017. Considerable importance is paid to the regulation of the basic organizational and legal foundations of financing changes and reforms in the field of health care.

The fifth stage, a systematic and gradual reform of the healthcare sector, began in 2018 and continues to this day. Its peculiarity is the introduction of targeted financing of the needs of the healthcare sector and the use of medical subvention. At the same time, great importance is attached to the formation of mechanisms for the creation of hospital districts and the development of criteria for their determination. In turn, the creation of a special state executive body – the National Health Service of Ukraine provides for the high-quality implementation of the state policy of financing guarantees for the provision of medical services to the population.

The main changes that are expected to be achieved in the process of reforming the health care system [13, p. 217] are proposed to be systematized according to their main directions and highlight the following features:

- 1) financing of specialized and highly specialized health care institutions is carried out through the National Health Service of Ukraine, which will prevent the closure of such institutions with the subsequent dismissal of medical personnel;
- 2) additional funding of such packages of State programs of medical guarantees as: primary and emergency medical care, acute myocardial infarction, acute cerebral stroke in inpatient conditions, as well as four packages for the treatment of coronavirus infection COVID-19;
- 3) increasing the level of remuneration of medical workers;
- 4) carrying out expert studies of the entire infrastructure of the health care sector, including determining the level of capacity and efficiency of the functioning of the hospital network;
- 5) formation and regulation of new standards for the provision of medical services;
- 6) approval and introduction of new tariffs for medical services with reference to market wages and the quality of medical services.

Undoubtedly, different periods of development of the medical services market in the health care system of Ukraine are characterized by a set of problematic aspects that are associated with transformational restructuring and transition to market principles of the functioning of the economy. At the same time, the existing legislation did not meet the requirements of modernity, as a result of which the process of rapid reform was not implemented. Moreover, in today's conditions, the system of functioning of the medical services market remains ineffective, despite the achievement of certain effective indicators of its reform and improvement.

Established traditions and stereotypes about the free system of medical care in the context of chronic underfunding of the industry create significant obstacles to ensuring the effective functioning of the medical services market. Moreover, the proposed measures of mechanical increase in the volume of financing of the health care sector in Ukraine cause and deepen the irrationality of the use of available resources and do not contribute to improving the quality of medical services. At the same time, the implementation of a radical restructuring of the entire health care system at this stage is impossible, due to the insufficient level of its institutional support and the emergence of new challenges and dangers for the healthcare sector, in particular, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and military confrontation with the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

It becomes obvious that changes and reforms of the medical services market of Ukraine throughout the entire period of the state's existence are due to a number of different kinds of problems and challenges, and the period up to 2017 can be characterized more as preparation for the health care reform than the reform itself. At the same time, the main reasons for the intensification of the need for reform in the future can be called:

- 1) decrease in the efficiency of the country's medical services market and the quality of medical services within the framework of growing trends in household spending on health care;
- 2) strengthening the processes of European integration, which set obligations for Ukraine to sign and implement the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union;
- 3) formation and implementation of the state program "Health – 2020: Ukrainian Choice" in accordance with the European strategy "Health – 2020";
- 4) decrease in the level of prestige of labor in the field of healthcare, low level of remuneration of medical specialists, and weakening of trends in the professional and qualification potential of the healthcare sector.

Obviously, there is an urgent need to revise approaches to the functioning of the medical services market, and the financing of the health care sector should be carried out taking into account the need to update the material and technical condition of health care institutions and maximize the population's access to health care services without significant damage to their financial situation.

The difficulty of reforming the market of medical services and the unpredictability of the impact of destructive changes are due to certain difficulties and obstacles to the implementation of the basic principles of the reform, which are associated with problems of a material, technical, financial and organizational nature, the most significant of which we systematize in Figure 2. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing the existence of risks of not obtaining the desired results of the reform, among which the following occupy a prominent place:

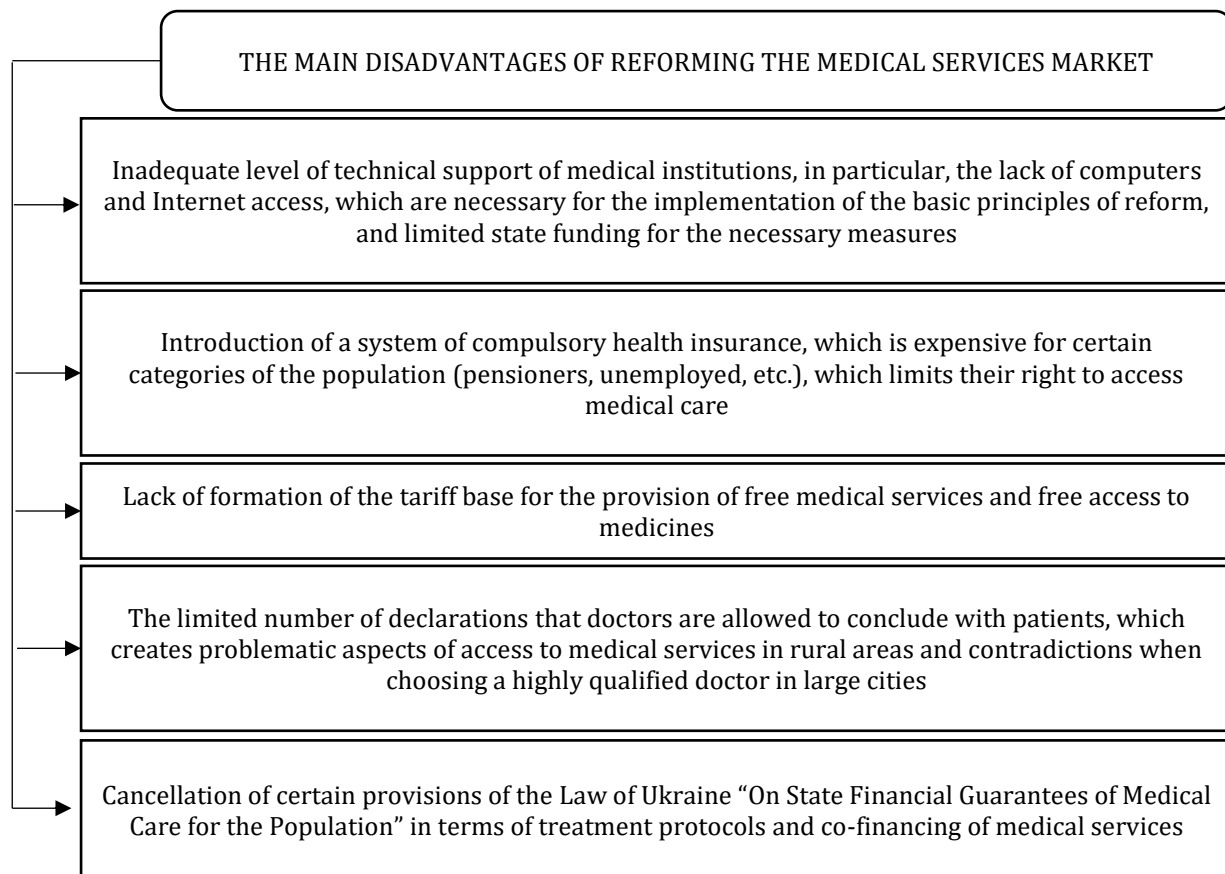
- 1) refusal of a significant proportion of the population to use medical services that are not guaranteed by the state, as a result of which there is a risk of the spread of chronic diseases and deterioration of the health of the majority of the population;
- 2) increasing the share of administrative costs aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of the system of benefits and discounts for socially vulnerable categories of the population;
- 3) reducing the opportunities and financial capacity of maintaining communal medical institutions owned by non-profit communities;
- 4) intensification of the development of the shadow market of medical services;
- 5) reducing the level of efficiency of informal expenditures made by households to receive medical services in case of failure by the state to establish high standards of medical services;
- 6) lack of a mechanism for controlling funds that will officially enter the health care system;
- 7) strengthening segregation in the market of medical services in Ukraine, under which private and non-profit medical institutions will not be allowed to provide services, including due to further state reimbursement of their cost on the terms of equality and parity with state and regional health care institutions;
- 8) reducing the state's obligations to protect and guarantee the provision of socially significant medical services, which include the protection of motherhood and persons with special needs.

Taking into account the outlined trends, it should be stated that the national market of medical services in Ukraine has extremely low opportunities to achieve absolute perfection, since consumers of medical services are not able to fully receive truthful information about the quality of medical services and the competitive advantages of certain medical products. In addition, the strengthening of the territoriality factor does not contribute to the desired choice of medical institutions, which neutralizes the concept of the functioning of medical institutions on the basis of competition.

At the same time, significant efforts to strengthen the processes of decentralized governance in the medical services market have not brought the desired socio-economic effect, and significant abuses in overstating tariffs for the provision of medical services in the private sector reduce the level of trust in the healthcare system as a whole and exacerbate the problem of the industry's competitiveness.

The domestic health care system has undergone significant destructive changes as a result of the full-scale military invasion of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine and the annexation of large territories, which are manifested in the restriction of access of a significant share of the population to the medical services market due to their stay in the territory not controlled by the Ukrainian side. No less important is the problem of large-scale destruction of medical infrastructure as a result of active hostilities on the contact line.

Large-scale transformations of the domestic healthcare system and the reformatting of the national market of medical services to meet the requirements of martial law in the state necessitate the emergence of a new category of the population – internally displaced persons who need emergency medical care of various nature outside their territorial affiliation – when reforming the medical sector.



**Figure 2. The Main Disadvantages of Reforming the Medical Services Market in Ukraine**

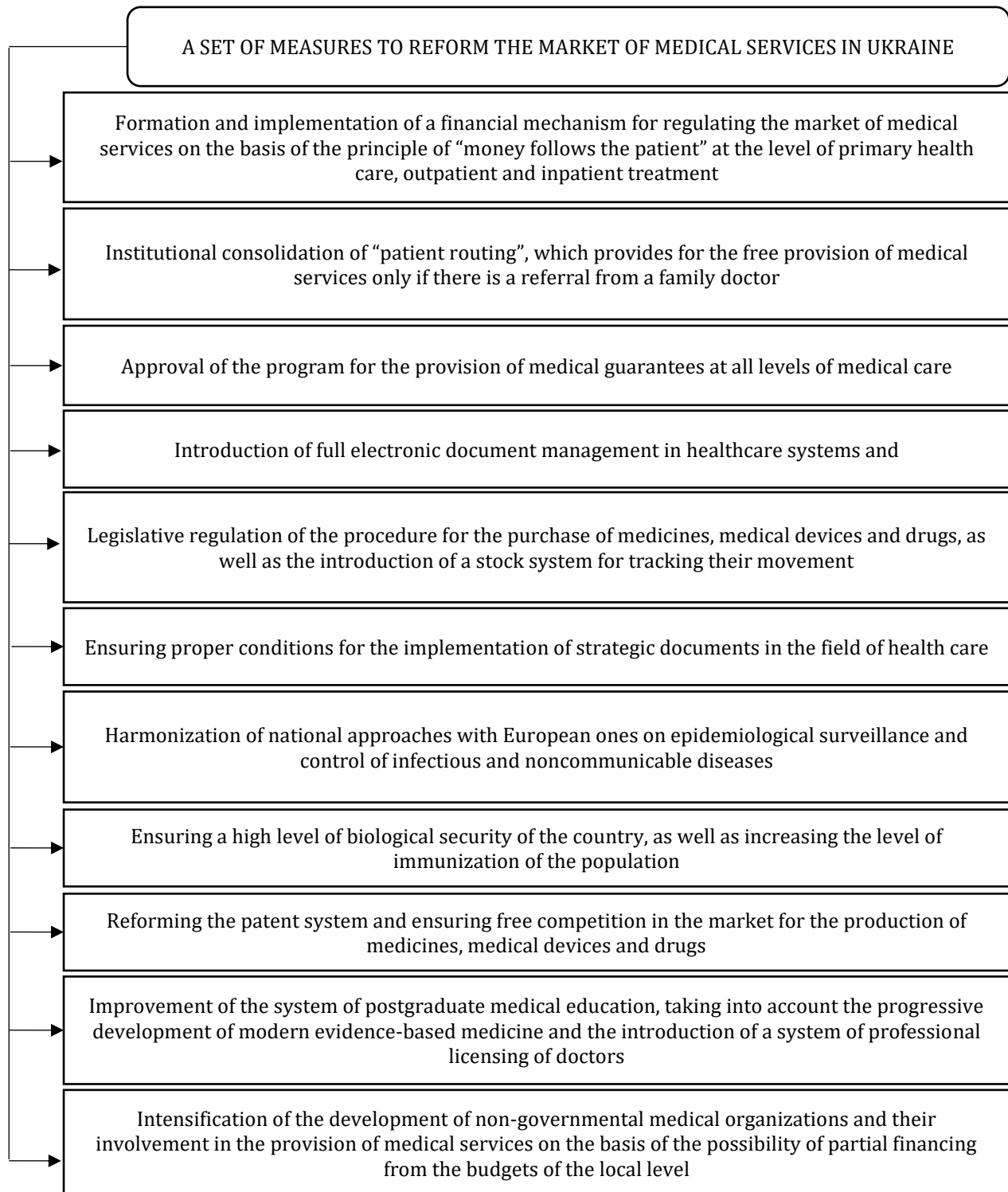
Source: [9, p. 89].

Reforming the market of medical services in Ukraine is subject to a radical change in the organizational and economic principles of management, which are implemented with market conditions and European standards, which requires the implementation of several urgent measures, the main list of which is reflected in Figure 3.

It should be noted that changes and reforms of the medical services market of Ukraine are taking place in the system of reforming the health care sector; therefore, the main trends in its improvement certainly extend to the market of medical services. An indisputable fact of the current state of the medical industry is the problems with financing the needs of medicine, because the current state of the state budget is not able to cover the existing costs of updating the material and technical base, providing full medicines and paying for high-quality medical services. Therefore, within the framework of the reform of the health care sector, the expediency of introducing insurance medicine as one of the priority areas of reforming the medical services market, which will eliminate the shadow component and corruption risks in the medical services market, improve the quality of medical services and the efficiency of using available resources, is quite justified. However, as Bora and Yu. [5], to ensure the development of insurance medicine in the unstable conditions of our time in Ukraine, the urgent need remains:

- 1) formation and application of market mechanisms for the maximum possible self-regulation of the health care sector;
- 2) creation of appropriate conditions for the development of healthy competition in the market of medical services;
- 3) legislative regulation of the issues of compulsory social health insurance;
- 4) specification of the levels of medical care and a clear definition of the types of medical services provided at each of them;
- 5) structuring the population into certain groups, the provision of medical services to which will be carried out from health insurance funds;
- 6) introduction of uniform state standards for the provision of medical services by health care institutions, regardless of the form of ownership and strengthening of state control over such a process;

7) formation of a unified system of classification of medical services and pricing for them.



**Figure 3. A Set of Measures to Reform the Market of Medical Services in Ukraine**

Source: [3]

The positive side of these measures is a significant reduction in the burden on state budgets of various levels, obtaining additional incentives and opportunities for obtaining quality medical services, as well as, which is no less important, reducing the level of shadow medicine and corruption risks in the medical sector.

In this context, [16, p. 15] emphasizes the formation of an appropriate level of functioning of regional markets of medical services, taking into account the needs of the development of the health care sector of a specific territorially defined unit and the peculiarities of the life of the population of a particular region. The importance of such emphasis is the possibility of a complete transition from an

itemized estimate of financing of health care institutions to the payment of a specific type of medical services provided, which will allow the implementation of a patient-oriented approach to the development of the medical services market. At the same time, the reformatting and modernization of the financing system is considered a significant achievement, in particular, primary health care is financed per person, and the costs of specialized medical care are covered depending on the treated case.

Granting independence to health care institutions of the regional level regarding the management of financial and human resources will allow taking into account the needs of each territorial community when choosing medical services and guarantee a higher level of accessibility, quality and efficiency of relationships between providers and customers of medical services, since it creates an opportunity to ensure enhanced control in the market of medical services both by state authorities and local self-government, and on the part of the public, making it impossible to make “informal” payments, which are common in the healthcare system today.

## 6. Conclusions

Thus, the study of problematic aspects regarding the changes and features of reforming the medical services market in Ukraine during 1991–2022 give grounds to assert that the entire period of development of the national market of medical services is accompanied by challenges, dangers and destabilizing impact of risks and threats to the existence of Ukraine as an independent, sovereign and democratic state, which were especially aggravated in 2013 – 2014. after the Revolution of Dignity, the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and a significant part of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and deepened after the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine in 2022.

At the same time, it has been revealed that in modern conditions, the market of medical services suffers the greatest negative impact due to the lack of financial resources, the low quality of medical services, the insignificant share of the provision of medical services by private health care institutions and due to the imperfection of the current national legislation regulating the basic principles of the functioning of the health care sector.

The introduced reform of the health care system has been partially implemented, however, the existing measures aimed at changing the market of medical services do not give the desired results, and their imperfection indicates the existence of several shortcomings of such reform, which necessitates the search for ways out of the crisis, which can be achieved as a result of the formation of strategic priorities and the implementation of an effective state policy for the development of the medical services market of Ukraine.

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