

Addicts Should Be Forcibly Treated, Chief Sanitary Doctor Says

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Chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko **Sergei Porter**

Chief sanitary doctor Gennady Onishchenko said Wednesday that Russia should introduce a policy of forcibly treating some drug addicts.

"It is obvious that humane, mandatory [treatment] is essential. Who, how and under what conditions — those are questions that must be answered," Onishchenko told Interfax.

But Onishchenko stressed that compulsory treatment should be one of a set of tools used to control drug-addiction levels.

"Forced treatment should not be a universal cure but one of many measures," he said.

Other measures to limit addiction mentioned by Onishchenko included ad campaigns promoting a healthy lifestyle and efforts to crack down on drug traffickers.

Earlier Wednesday, the Federal Drug Control Service released the latest data on the prevalence of drug dependency.

According to the research, 8.5 million Russians regularly or occasionally use drugs, a significant increase over the figure of 5 million cited in the agency's last report.

Onishchenko's backing of forced drug-addiction treatment is the latest indication that the government is toughening its narcotics policy.

The Federal Drug Control Service in March drafted a bill to introduce criminal punishments for "systematic" drug use, defined as use more than two or three times a year.

The agency said at the time that it views the measure as a means of encouraging addicts to seek medical help.

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