

Medvedev Orders Regional Authorities to Control Price of Medication

May 13, 2015



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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev has tasked regional authorities with controlling the prices of essential medications, according to a statement published Wednesday on the Russian government's official website.

The cost of medicine skyrocketed in Russia following the ruble's drastic depreciation in 2014. For the first quarter of 2015, the cost of essential drugs increased by 6.9 percent, the TASS news agency reported.

The prices of the 608 medications included among the country's Vital and Essential Drugs List are traditionally regulated by the federal government.

Since the start of this year, the cost of drugs considered nonessential increased by 29 percent, the TASS report said.

According to Medvedev's decree, regional authorities will have to ensure that wholesalers, pharmacies and medical organizations do not charge patients more than the actual sale price set by a given drug's manufacturer or the price established in their region.

Medvedev's most recent orders follow President Vladimir Putin's repeated calls to keep the cost of medicine in check amid the economic crisis.

At his annual call-in show last month, Putin noted that the price of medication had increased because of the exchange rate, adding that the government was not planning to stop importing foreign drugs.

Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova told Russian media earlier this month that the government had received a large number of complaints regarding the increasing price of medication. She claimed her ministry had uncovered more than 2,000 violations in the retail prices of medication in 22 regions in the first quarter of the year.

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