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Flu Epidemic in Russia Claims Over 100 Lives

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More than one hundred Russians have died since a flu epidemic was announced in early January, Russian Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova told the RIA Novosti state-run news agency on Thursday.

Among the 107 fatal victims of the flu epidemic are eight children and four pregnant women, she was cited as saying in the report.

The minister said none of the victims had been vaccinated against the disease, and a majority had been late in seeking medical assistance.

But she called for a measured response to the deaths, saying over the same period 4,500 people had died of heart attacks, 6,000 people had suffered a fatal stroke and 1,000 people had died in road accidents.

"Without question, every human life is of paramount value, but we should judge [the flu epidemic] adequately," she was cited as saying.

A swine flu epidemic in 2009 claimed 687 Russian lives, the minister said.

Earlier this week, Russia's consumer rights watchdog Rospotrebnadzor warned against an epidemic of flu and acute respiratory viral infection in Moscow, saying the infection rate among the capital's population had exceeded 37.8 percent, the TASS news agency reported at the time.

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