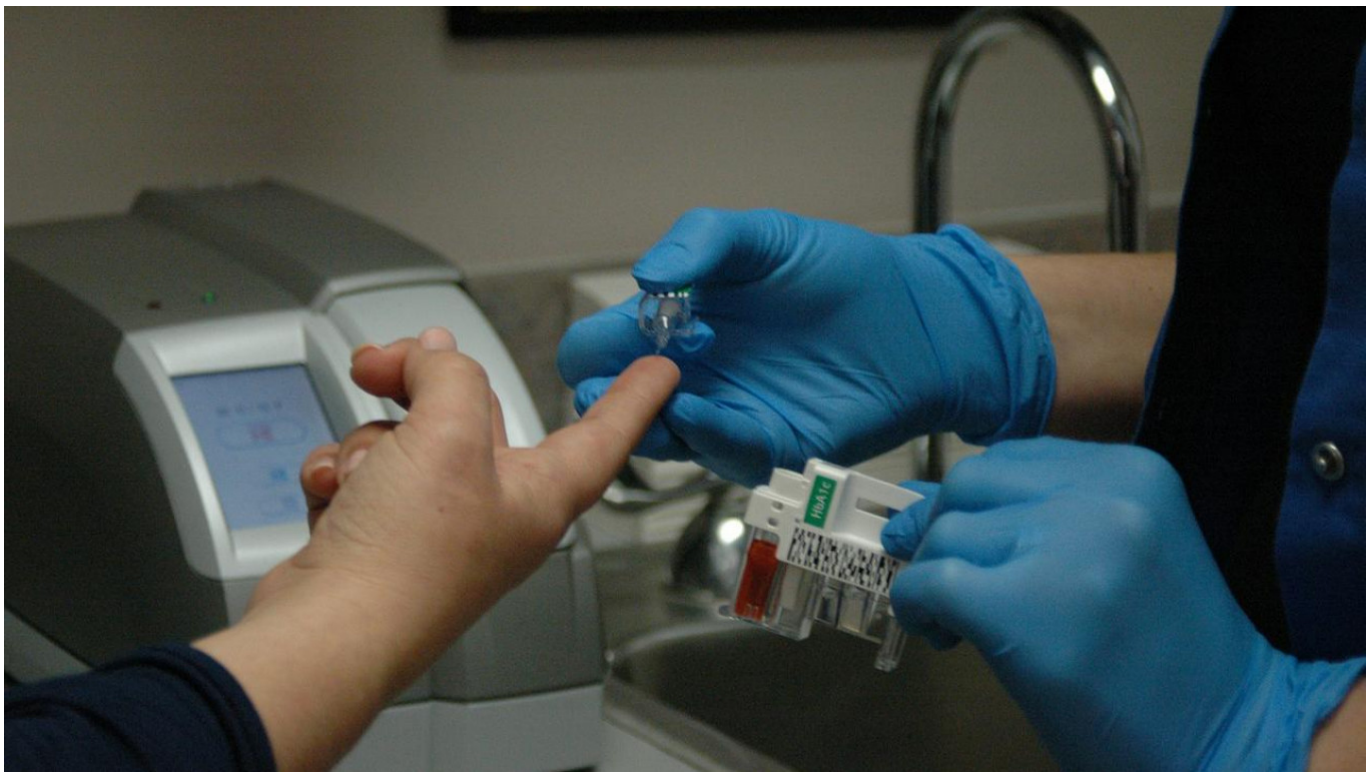
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30 YEARS
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Pro-Putin Activist Claims Diabetes Society Is a 'Foreign Agent'

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Some 82,000 diabetes patients in southern Russia risk losing access to vital medicines after a pro-Kremlin activist called an NGO helping them to be labelled a "foreign agent."

Under a 2012 law, organizations in the foreign agent registry are subject to additional inspections and are required to submit regular reports about their funding, objectives and expenses.

Related article: Russia Labels Grassroots Trucker NGO 'Foreign Agent'

Nikita Smirnov, a local student activist, filed a complaint against the Saratov NGO for Disabled People With Diabetes after learning that it was funded from abroad.

"I read on the internet that this organization exists with the funding of foreign companies, I

don't remember which," Nikita Smirnov told the Novaya Gazeta investigative newspaper Thursday.

The local prosecutor's office called for an investigation into the NGO following the student's complaint, leading to a court hearing to be scheduled for Jan. 15, 2018. An expert evaluation in favor of the investigation has said the NGO's activities discredit local authorities, Novaya Gazeta reported.

"It monitors weak points in the region, especially in the provision of medical services to the population, which can be used to inspire protests sentiments in society."

The diabetes association, which helps patients secure necessary medications and legal support, face fines of up to half a million rubles ($8,600).

Smirnov, a second-year student who heads a youth group supporting President Vladimir Putin's re-election, told Novaya Gazeta that it was his "civic duty" to report the organization.

"You would have done the same if you suspected something like that."

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