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Russia to Diagnose Coronavirus Without Tests as Suspicions Mount

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Russia is currently the world's 17th-most affected country with 11,917 officially reported coronavirus cases Friday. **Vyacheslav Prokofyev / TASS**

Russian doctors will now be able to diagnose patients with coronavirus without running lab tests, the country's top health official has said as Russia's relatively low infection figures have drawn suspicion among medical experts.

The move comes after a new Russian study placed the accuracy of the country's Covid-19 tests at 70% to 80%, with the rest being false negatives. Russia is currently the world's 17th-most affected country with 11,917 officially reported coronavirus cases Friday.

Related article: Russia Says It Has Very Few Coronavirus Cases. The Numbers Don't Tell the Full Story.

"We see that the course of the disease is sometimes so quick that it has a distinct clinical picture," Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said in an interview Thursday.

“That’s why it’s diagnosed without laboratory confirmation. It’s standard practice for doctors,” Murashko told the state-run Rossia television channel.

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His interview follows Moscow doctors’ decision to treat all pneumonia patients as potential coronavirus patients because the fast-spreading virus often causes pneumonia.

A sharp spike in pneumonia cases in the Russian capital in March stoked concerns about the accuracy of coronavirus tests in the country, Reuters reported at the time.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin warned residents Friday that “we haven’t reached a peak” in coronavirus infections yet.

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