

Russia's Coronavirus Outbreak Jeopardizes Care for Patients With Rare Diseases

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Health officials have been told to allocate up to 100,000 hospital beds for coronavirus patients. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

The lives of thousands of Russian patients with rare diseases are in danger because the country's hospitals are being repurposed to address the coronavirus outbreak, the Kommersant business daily [reported](#) Wednesday.

The government ordered health officials to allocate up to 100,000 hospital beds for Covid-19 patients, the newspaper [reported](#) earlier this month. Officials were ordered to free up capacity by repurposing hospitals and halting the treatment of other patients, with rare exceptions for cancer and cardiovascular patients.

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The Russian Patients' Association has warned the Health Ministry that patients with chronic hepatitis, primary immunodeficiency and cystic fibrosis, among other diseases, are currently facing difficulties in receiving treatment, according to Kommersant.

"We're getting a lot of letters saying that patients are denied assistance," its co-chairman Yury Zhulev was quoted as saying.

He estimated that the new directives threaten the health of "thousands."

"Patients with other diseases are often simply asked to wait because the regions don't allocate other facilities for their treatment," Zhulev added.

Around 1,000 hepatitis patients alone require monthly treatment across the country, Kommersant cited Nikita Kovalenko, the CEO of the United Against Hepatitis group, as saying.

"Up to one-third of them may be in serious condition, where delaying medical care threatens death or serious complications," Kovalenko was quoted as saying.

Other health advocacy groups reported HIV patients facing difficulties undergoing tests as part of their antiretroviral therapy and cancer patients having their surgeries and radiation therapy rescheduled.

Russia [confirmed](#) 5,236 new coronavirus infections on Wednesday, bringing the country's official number of cases to 57,999.

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