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60% of Coronavirus Patient Deaths Not Counted Toward Total, Moscow Officials Say

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Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency

More than 60% of deaths among Moscow's coronavirus patients are not being included toward the city's official virus death toll, city health officials said Wednesday.

Moscow, the epicenter of Russia's coronavirus outbreak, has seen a low mortality rate compared to other major world capitals, with just 1,232 deaths out of 126,004 infections as of Wednesday. Critics have cast doubt on the numbers, as Russia only counts the deaths of coronavirus-positive patients toward its total if pathologists say the virus played a direct role in their death.

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“Over 60% of deaths occurred from obvious alternate causes, such as vascular accidents, stage 4 malignant diseases, leukemia, systemic diseases linked to organ failure and other incurable deadly diseases,” Moscow's Health Department said in a statement.

Moscow reported 639 deaths directly caused by Covid-19 in April, meaning about 1,597 coronavirus-positive patients died that month overall based on the Health Department's percentage.

Newly released preliminary data from Moscow’s civil registry office first published by The Moscow Times showed 20% more fatalities in April 2020 than the average April mortality total over the past decade, suggesting that the city’s excess deaths could be linked to coronavirus.

The Health Department on Wednesday said that it is “incorrect to compare monthly death rates” and refuted claims that it was under-reporting its coronavirus deaths.

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