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Russia Considers Stripping Coronavirus Bonuses From Medics Who Refuse Vaccine – Reports

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A recent survey of Russian healthcare professionals said more than half of them would not take the country's coronavirus vaccine. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian health officials have proposed depriving medics of promised coronavirus payouts if they refuse to vaccinate against the infection, the Medvestnik medical news website has reported.

President Vladimir Putin this spring promised monthly bonuses ranging from $300 to $1,000 for doctors and other medical professionals treating Covid-19 patients. Russian doctors have since reported being underpaid or not receiving the bonuses at all, prompting the federal government to intervene and force regional authorities to distribute the money.

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The Health Ministry's research institute for healthcare organization and informatization said in an analytical paper that "the state has the right to set conditions" for the bonuses, Medvestnik reported Monday.

"We believe that getting vaccinated against Covid-19 should be set as a condition for medical workers receiving certain social support measures," the proposal reportedly states.

Exceptions would be made for medical professionals who cannot get the vaccine because it could cause them harm or for other objective reasons, it adds.

A survey of more than 3,000 Russian healthcare professionals last month said that more than half of them would not take the highly touted vaccine. Putin announced around that time that Russia was the first country to register its vaccine against Covid-19, though final trials of its long-term safety and effectiveness got underway only last week.

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Medvestnik said that the analytical paper containing the proposal was deleted from the research institute's website after Medvestnik published its report.

Health Ministry aide Alexei Kuznetsov told the RBC news website that the ministry was analyzing all expert proposals and stressed the importance of vaccinating medics, who are at greater risk of getting infected. Kuznetsov noted that the ministry adheres to the principle of voluntary vaccination, however.

The institute's head Olga Kobyakova echoed Kuznetsov's point that the vaccination should be voluntary.

Russia has confirmed more than 1 million coronavirus cases and more than 18,500 deaths since recording its first infection in March.

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