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Russia Clears Two Coronavirus Drugs for Pharmacy Sale

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Both newly approved drugs are Russia-manufactured variants of Japan-developed favipiravir. **Sergei Kiselyov / Moskva News Agency**

Two Russian-made coronavirus treatment drugs have been cleared for pharmacy sale, allowing for widespread at-home treatment of the infection, the Health Ministry announced in a statement to the state-run RIA-Novosti news agency Thursday.

Both drugs are Russia-manufactured variants of favipiravir, the generic version of an anti-flu medication developed by Japan's Fujifilm. Clinical trials of the pill-form drug showed reduced recovery times among coronavirus patients, though only Russia, India and China officially recommend it for treating the virus.

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One of the approved medications, registered under brand name Areplivir, will appear on pharmacy shelves in most Russian regions starting Monday, the head of its manufacturer

Promomed confirmed to the Kommersant business daily.

Another drug, Koronavir, is expected to become available at the same time.

According to Koronavir manufacturer R-Farm, the drug minimizes complications associated with Covid-19. Over 50% of clinical study patients showed improvements after seven days of treatment, which is 1.5 times better than the control group which didn't take the drug, the manufacturer told the RBC news website.

The Health Ministry has previously approved one other brand of favipiravir, Avifavir, though its manufacture has largely been export-oriented with supplies reaching neighboring Belarus and Kazakhstan.

Despite early hopes voiced by then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, favipiravir has not been approved for Covid-19 treatment in Japan after Fujifilm's own trials yielded "inconclusive" results.

Allowing patients with less-severe coronavirus cases to undergo outpatient treatment is expected to reduce pressure on Russia's healthcare sector and keep hospital beds open for patients with severe bouts of the virus.

While Russia has placed high stakes in its Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine, currently in the final trial stage, nearly half of the country remains skeptical toward it, saying they would "never" vaccinate.

Russia has confirmed more than 1 million infections and more than 19,000 deaths from coronavirus so far.

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