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Russia Confirms First S. African Coronavirus Strain Cases

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Russia has recorded the world's fourth-highest total of Covid-19 cases at 4.4 million. **Sofia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

A more contagious strain of the coronavirus first discovered in South Africa has been detected in Russia, the country's health authorities said Tuesday.

The officials said two people have been found to have the variant out of over 8,000 tests conducted among Russians arriving from abroad and those with atypical presentations of the disease.

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According to the Rospotrebnadzor consumer protection agency, 28 Russians had the British strain and 16 an unspecified mutation.

Rospotrebnadzor said it had not yet found cases of the Brazilian strain as of Tuesday. It said

the 8,159 samples had been collected from new arrivals, re-infected and treatment-resistant patients, as well as children under 5 with severe Covid-19.

“Rospotrebnadzor continues its systematic work to identify and study the variability of the SARS-CoV-2 virus,” it said, noting that 14 of its research organizations are involved.

The 501Y.V2 variant was identified in South Africa late last year and became the dominant strain there, fueling a second wave and delaying the country's vaccination campaign.

The South African variant has been discovered in 58 countries, according to the World Health Organization.

The more transmissible variant has raised concerns about Covid-19 vaccine effectiveness and possible re-infections.

Russia has recorded the world’s fourth-highest total of Covid-19 cases at 4.4 million.

Daily Covid-19 task force figures report 92,500 deaths, but the state statistics service says that more than 200,000 Russians diagnosed with the disease have died since the start of the outbreak in April 2020.

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