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Russian Doctors Refusing to Vaccinate People Living With HIV – NGO

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Health experts told RBC that HIV is not a contraindication to Covid-19 vaccines. **Vladimir Novikov / Moskva News Agency**

Russian doctors are refusing to vaccinate people living with HIV against the coronavirus despite data showing them to be safe for immunocompromised people, a Russian AIDS NGO said Tuesday.

Thirty out of 700 people with HIV at a Moscow AIDS prevention and control center were refused Covid-19 vaccination by a single doctor in June, according to AIDS.Center nonprofit director Sergei Abdurakhmanov's estimates.

The AIDS.Center has asked Russia's Health Ministry to instruct hospitals, clinics and vaccination centers not to turn away HIV-positive people.

"With the new coronavirus pandemic, AIDS.Center is registering cases of discrimination against people with HIV during vaccination," the nonprofit said in its letter to the Health Ministry published on its website.

“The practice of refusing vaccination to people with HIV directly contradicts medical recommendations and, more than anything, the interests of patients.”

Health experts told the RBC news website that HIV is not a contraindication — or a health condition or other characteristic that would make it unsafe for patients to take a drug — to Covid-19 vaccines.

AIDS prevention experts cited by RBC suggested that “uneducated” doctors are issuing medical exemptions to Covid-19 vaccination on the basis of an HIV infection.

People living with HIV are more vulnerable to infectious diseases and should be vaccinated as a priority group, the Health Ministry’s chief HIV expert Alexander Mazus said following AIDS.Center's letter.

The World Health Organization says current WHO-recommended vaccines are safe for people living with HIV. The WHO has not yet approved any of Russia’s Covid-19 vaccines.

Almost 1.2 million people are estimated to be living with HIV in Russia.

Russia’s vaccination drive has stalled below 20% of the population amid widespread skepticism and despite compulsory vaccination aimed at curbing a surge in new Covid-19 infections and deaths in recent weeks.

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