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Antidepressant Sales Reach Record High in Wartime Russia

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Kevin Bidwell / pexels

Antidepressant sales in Russia hit an all-time high last year, with 16.1 million packages of the medication sold between January and November, the Kommersant business daily reported Friday, citing market research data.

That figure surpasses the 15.3 million packages of antidepressants sold throughout 2023, as well as the 13 million sold in 2022, reflecting a steady increase in sales since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

A pharmaceutical industry consultant cited by Kommersant said the continued rise is partly due to a shift in medical practices, as doctors increasingly prescribe modern antidepressants over Soviet-era sedatives and tranquilizers, which lack scientifically proven efficacy.

Despite the surging demand, antidepressants have grown more expensive, outpacing inflation, according to official data. Russians spent 13.5 billion rubles ($131.5 million) on antidepressants in the first 11 months of 2024 — a 31.9% increase from the same period in

2023.

The three most popular antidepressants in Russia are amitriptyline, fluoxetine and Zoloft.

Zoloft sales surged by 300% to 1.7 million packages in 2024 after returning to Russian pharmacy shelves. U.S. and EU sanctions on pharmaceutical and medical device exports had previously disrupted supplies of the medication.

Kommersant reported that Russian pharmacies and distributors continue to face shortages of antidepressants due to the combination of high demand and Western sanctions.

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