

# Russia Cuts Funding for HIV Treatment

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Denis Abramov / Vedomosti

Russia's regions have received 10 to 30 percent less funding for HIV medication than planned, the Kommersant newspaper reported Tuesday.

According to Kommersant's sources in health care, regional authorities were obliged to revoke already-announced drug purchase auctions due to a funding shortfall that is reportedly connected to the cuts in the federal budget.

HIV patients in Russia's regions have already felt the impact of the medicine shortage. "The center is in deficit due to funding delays from the federal budget," a representative of the HIV treatment center in the Tver region said in response to a patient's complaint.

A report by the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition revealed that funding for antiretroviral treatment planned for this year in Russian regions has dropped from 5 to 27 percent in comparison to last year.

The number of HIV patients in Russia reached 1.3 million this year, according to the Federal HIV Center.✘

Only 60–70 percent of registered HIV-positive citizens are being treated✘ in Russian medical institutions, Vadim Pokrovsky, head of the ✘Moscow-based Federal Center for Fighting AIDS, told Kommersant.✘

Pokrovsky has expressed concern about the lack of funding, saying that it may result in the deterioration of treatment.✘✘

“The fact is that medication funds, already struggling to cover growing ✘drugs prices, were cut even further, while the number of infected ✘Russians increases by 10–13 percent every year,” an activist from the ✘Pereboi.ru medication shortages monitoring website, Andrei Skvortsov, ✘told The Moscow Times.✘

“As a result, more Russian hospitals switch to old and cheap medications,” he said.✘✘

According to Pereboi.ru, Russia has faced repeated disruptions in drugs ✘supplies for more than six years. “Some of the regions manage to cover ✘the lack of funding using local financial programs — but this scheme ✘works for about six of more than 80 Russian regions,” Skvortsov added.✘

The HIV infection rate will continue to grow throughout Russia, ✘Skvortsov warned, as even short disruptions in treatment cause the ✘mutation of the virus that quickly adapts to medications and develops ✘faster.✘

The Russian Health Ministry declined to comment on the matter. In ✘January, Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova claimed that funding for ✘medication is “a public commitment” and would not be reduced.✘

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