

# Russian Social Network Blocks HIV-Denier Group

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**The**  **Moscow Times**

Russia's Odnoklassniki social media website blocked a group that spread false information about the non-existence of HIV and AIDS, the TJournal news website reported Friday.

The group, made up of 700 members, often published pieces to persuade readers that HIV and AIDS do not exist, as well as some pieces opposing credit institutions and banks. The group was blocked following a petition on the Change.org website, Odnoklassniki's spokesperson told TJournal.

The petition was filed by the Novosibirsk Center of AIDS Prevention. Doctors asked Odnoklassniki and VKontakte, another social network site, to block several such groups because they encouraged those infected with HIV to fall for "illusions" and not seek treatment, TJournal reported.

The four Vkontakte sites mentioned in the petition, one of which has 15,000 members, have not yet been blocked.

The number of HIV-positive patients registered in Russia hit one million in 2015, however that number may be closer to 1.5 million, according to experts. The HIV epidemic in Russia is a “catastrophe,” Vadim Pokrovsky, the head of the Moscow-based Federal Center for Fighting AIDS said last year.

HIV patients in the Moscow region have struggled to receive medicine over the past several years. The state procurement system is often reported to be inefficient, after a Health Ministry change that put the regional administrations in charge, rather than collecting requests. In July, the government reportedly cut funding for HIV treatment, leaving many regions with less than planned.

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