How One Man Boosted Russian Interest in HIV Testing 5,500%

Plus: Of the 1.4 million HIV cases in Russia since 1987, over half were registered after Putin's third term began in 2012.

February 18, 2020 By Trent Straube

Never underestimate the power of social media to fight HIV. On February 11, Yuri Dud, a popular YouTuber in Russia posted a nearly two-hour documentary titled HIV in Russia: An Epidemic That is Not Talked About. Not only has the film been viewed over 13.5 million times—including by members of the Kremlin—but it also set off an explosion of curiosity about HIV testing.

That's evidenced by the fact that Google searches for HIV testing shot up 5,500% compared with the seven-day average for such searches the week before Dud released his film, according to TJournal statistics reported by PinkNews. What's more, the YouTube episode has racked up over 90,000 comments. (Alas, the movie, which you can view below, and the comments are mostly in Russian.)

Raising awareness of HIV and encouraging people to get tested are especially important in Russia because the nation's government remains silent about the epidemic, despite the growing number of infections. About 100 people die of AIDS-related illness each day in Russia, according to Pink News.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said he watched Dud's film and "it was good," reports Reuters. "The main thing is that the relevant (official) bodies are acquainted with it." In addition, a head of the country's Audit Chamber promised to look into the quality of medical care offered to people living with HIV in Russia.

As previously reported in POZ, Russia saw 104,000 new cases of HIV in 2017, leading the president of the International AIDS Society to say, "I keep thinking, this is sub-Saharan Africa happening all over again." HIV rates are also rising across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In Russia, nearly half of new HIV transmissions are the result of needle sharing and injection drug use.

For a related article, see "How Fake News and Homophobia Fuel HIV in Russia," which looks at Operation Infektion, a 1980s Soviet disinformation campaign that remains a powerful playbook for 2020.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/one-man-boosted-russian-interest-hiv-testing-5500