

# New reality of ageing in Russia: social care in the state-run or in the community



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# Introduction

- Officially, the COVID-19 pandemic has begun in Russia in March 2020. According to the Russian Statistical Agency (Rosstat), the number of deaths in Russia has reached more **2,4 million people** by January-December 2021, exceeding the figure for the corresponding period in 2020 by about **20%**, and for the same period in 2019 by more than **30%**.
- As in 2020, in 2021, the majority of those who died from coronavirus were older people. "We see that in the structure of mortality, **85% of the diseased people are over 60 years old**," said M. Murashko, head of the Ministry of Health.

# Transformation of Institutions. From state to mixed structures of long-term care (LTC) services for older person

- Since the entry into force of the new Federal Law “On Social Service” No. 442 in 2015, the sphere of care for older person has been becoming increasingly competitive: the traditional monopolist — **state-run social services** — **have got new competitors:** NGOs, business entities, non-formal/private contractors, foster families for older persons etc.
- Those changes were an important goal of the Federal Law — to give the client a choice of long-term care services for older persons. However, achievement **of this goal has faced a number of barriers:** rising costs of service, cancellation of benefits, and tough limits of the services provision.

# The problem: many new providers do not have a state license or standards of service

- The state's approach to managing the social services market is ambiguous. Opening access to non-governmental service providers has led to unintended consequences, especially during the pandemic.
- There are **near 3000 state-run nursing homes** in Russia.
- There are **1400 private nursing homes**, only **15% of them operate legally** due to absence of state licensing, but with some standards of procedures. The remaining **85% of private nursing homes operate** in the illegal or semi-criminal sector.

## The problem: many providers (2)

- Due to the pandemic, staying in **private nursing homes** has become really risky. This became widely known when reports about **fires** that occurred in such homes become public.
- Older persons did not receive the necessary help and even food in such institutions.
- Social services, especially in nursing homes, are not subject to licensing in Russia. The state supports the interests of private business, not older persons.

# Renovation of community care during the COVID-19 pandemic

By community care we understand any “mixed care” provided by close relatives/family, neighbors, NGOs, volunteers, municipal services, etc. After analyzing the activities of NGOs during pandemic, my co-author Dr. Oxana Parfenova and I identified 4 possible directions for community care development:

- 1) Promotion and popularization of the ideas of community care and mutual support.
- 2) Implementation of direct patronage/care for older people with limited mobility.
- 3) Organization and implementation of events/clubs/ “kindergartens” for older persons.
- 4) Specific skills trainings for relatives (“Schools for caring for relatives”) and other caregivers who provide social, psychological and other forms of support for older persons.

# COVID-19 and community care

- COVID-19 pandemic has played an unexpectedly significant role in promoting **solidarity among people and volunteering**. At the same time, social workers faced with some limitation of services that they could offer to older people.
- While state social services were declaring that they were "on the front line", NGOs were on the real front line and identified older persons left without support. NGOs helped to collect money to buy necessary protective equipment and delivered food during lockdown to lonely older persons
- These activities did not go unnoticed and the state structures starting in 2021 organized endless events and awards to honor volunteers .
- Civic grassroots initiatives and volunteerism are slowly disappearing these days. Volunteering is becoming formally regulated and accountable.

# Conclusion

- From 2020 to the present, working and leisure engagement of older persons has been significantly hampered by the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- The pandemic, on the one hand, has slowed down the development of the state-run long-term care (LTC) services for older persons. So far, it has been implemented only in 24 out of 85 regions (subjects of Russian Federation) due to weak interaction between health and social services, family and community.
- At the same time, the pandemic showed how important LTC is for older persons in Russia, because the death rate during the pandemic was very high in this population group.



Thank you for your attention!

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