

they wander around the hospital not knowing where to go, or are being refused treatment because they have not made an appointment in advance. Many respondents said that they were very disappointed when they went through a whole ordeal to save some money and go to a medical specialist in Rousse, but were treated with negligence and contempt. The access of Roma to surgical treatment is particularly difficult because most surgeons ask patients to pay in cash for operations.

As a result, most of the people in the Senovo Roma neighborhood resort to self-treatment. Often diseases which require hospitalization and constant monitoring, are being treated at home without any lab tests or supervision. Thus, chronified cases increase steadily.

The procedure for certifying people with temporary or permanent disability is also a serious challenge for Roma. The general practitioner assigned to the Roma neighborhood has not taken any measures to refer chronically ill or disabled patients to the territorial expert medical commission, or to inform them on the existing legislative framework in this field. Often Roma are unable to obtain all the documents for the commission, they have to make multiple trips to Rousse, they have to pay for various health services and at the end they just choose not to apply to the commission. In the same time, specialists from the diagnostics and consultation centers in Rousse refuse to refer to the territorial expert medical commission patients whose documents have been issued by the university hospitals in Sofia, insisting that the documents should be issued by the Rousse hospital.

This has denied many Roma the state-subsidized treatment provided to people with chronic diseases and disabilities. Chronically ill patients are also unable to receive free medication, because they have not been issued free medication cards or they do not know they are entitled to such support. Even those who do have cards, often cannot use them, because they have to travel to a pharmacy shop in a neighboring village.

Apart from immunizations, no other prophylactic programs have been made available to Roma.

Health Status of Roma in Senovo

Research on the health status of Roma in Senovo showed that pathological conditions are most often associated with diseases of the cardiovascular system: 10% of the population suffer from hypertonia, 6 % – from ischemic heart disease, 2% have had brain attack. Pulmonary diseases come second with 8% of Roma suffering from bronchitis, bronchial pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). 7.4% suffer from diseases of the locomotive system: discopathy and vertebral transformations.

The most common diseases among children are acute catarrhs, bronchitis, bronchopneumonia, intestinal infections, helminthiasis, hypovitaminosis and hypotrophy in infancy and early childhood.

Other relatively common diseases in the Roma community include pyelonephritis and calculus disease (2.5%); bronchial asthma (2.5%); duodenal ulcer (1.4%). There are also cases of struma nodosa (0.8%), rheumatoid arthritis and epilepsy (0.6%).

Tuberculosis affects 1.8% of the population in the neighborhood. Not all of the patients receive systematic treatment because some of them cannot afford to travel to the regional TB center in Rousse. Cases of extrapulmonary tuberculosis have also been identified. 1.2% of Roma suffer from hepatitis B. In some cases the disease has developed into cirrhosis at an early age. There are also several cases of echinococcosis in the neighborhood.

Gynecologic diseases (5%) are a serious problem for the Roma women in Senovo. Half of them suffer from ovarian myomas, adnexa or cysts, and the rest – from oncologic gynecologic diseases. This is the result of the lack of adequate prophylaxis. Approximately 1% of the women were diagnosed as sterile.