

More than 90% of Roma say that they cannot afford to pay the examination fees because they sometimes do not receive social assistance for months. In such cases the general practitioner examines them for free, but afterwards the fees due are being deducted by the social assistance payments.

Almost all the members of the Tulovo Roma community claim that they have no money for medicines and they do not undergo treatment. "We are left to our destiny. We treat ourselves as our grandmothers did. We will die like dogs at home". One mother complained that the general practitioner refused to vaccinate her 12-year daughter because she had not pay a user fee. Another woman told us that during a gall bladder attack she had to call the doctor several times and when he and the nurse finally came, they just connected her to an IV system and left without ever coming back. Later on when the substance that was being fed through the system finished, the patient's relatives had to disconnect it by themselves. The general practitioner refused to issue a medical certificate to a woman with thyrotoxicosis and she had to work for 5 days in a critical health condition, because otherwise she would have lost her social aid for the month.

Many Roma complained that they have a difficulty receiving referrals for special examinations in the hospital. A mother of a boy suffering from post-traumatic cerebral asthenia and phobic neurosis said that the general practitioner told her to take her child to a private specialist.

Discontented with the village physician, Roma wrote a petition, which they wanted to send to the Regional Health Insurance Fund. When the mayor learned about it, he came to the Roma neighborhood, tore the petition to pieces, and said that those who have signed it might not receive social assistance.

The dentist who serves the Roma community also has a private practice and the few who can afford to pay see him there. The rest have to set an appointment two months in advance.

All Roma claim that their access to specialized healthcare services is limited because they have no money for transportation, hospital fees and medicines. Some complained that doctors from the hospital make fun of them and humiliate them. The territorial expert medical commission refused to certify a patient with epilepsy and a brain tumor because he declined surgical treatment.

Health Status of Roma in Tulovo

Research on the health status of Roma in Tulovo showed that pathological conditions are most often associated with diseases of the cardiovascular system: 6.7% of the population suffer from hypertonia, 1.8% – from ischemic heart disease, 1% have had brain attack. Pulmonary diseases come second with 4.7% of Roma suffering from bronchitis, bronchial pneumonia and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Quite a few suffer from diseases of the locomotive system: discopathy and vertebral transformations.

Other relatively common diseases in the Roma community include duodenal ulcer (1.3%), psychosis (1.3%); pyelonephritis and calculus disease (1.1%); bronchial asthma (1.1%); epilepsy (1%); and anemia (1%). There are also cases of diabetes (0.6%), stroma nodosa (0.6), rheumatoid arthritis (0.6%) and thyrotoxicosis.

Tuberculosis affects 1.6% of the population in the neighborhood. Almost all of the patients receive systematic treatment and free medication. 1% suffer from viral hepatitis. There are also several cases of echinococcosis in the neighborhood. This year there were two cases of viral meningitis and an outburst of dysentery in the summer.

Gynecological diseases, usually ovarian myomas and cysts, have been discovered in 3% of the women.