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Statement of Investigative Committee on investigations against medical workers



As there have been many comments in mass media regarding the case of a jailed Moscow doctor, we deem it necessary to explain the situation. The fact that court sentence handed down to a medical worker is being commented by other people, including those connected with medicine, while they are not familiar with materials of the criminal case, basically doubting competence of their colleagues who made an expert conclusion on the case, is a great surprise. These people not only violate basic code of ethics, but provoke people into distrusting medicine system in general. Even greater surprise is comments left by people who have no knowledge of either work done by forensic experts or investigators, let alone of materials of this particular case.

Investigations into iatrogenic crimes are extremely complicated. However, investigative authorities



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make sure that each such incident is sorted out impartially. People report adverse medical events, but not each such event is consistent with a crime. We check carefully each report, but criminal investigation is launched into each third of them. For example, in 2017, the Investigative Committee received 6,050 reports of such crimes and 1,791 criminal cases were opened into them.

As for the investigative process, the Investigative Committee takes care that investigators who deal with such crimes advance in their skill. Investigators must have full knowledge of a doctor's job, know legal acts issued by the Russian Healthcare Ministry, capabilities of forensic medical expert examining and to be able to formulate questions to forensic experts. However, one should bear in mind that investigators make final decision on medical malpractice cases based on results of expert examinations made by medical experts. It often happens that injured parties doubt results of first examinations alluding to bias, professional ethics of doctors and request for second examination to be made in other forensic expert institutions. Investigators grant those requests. It is also possible that if a crime has been committed in one region, repeat examinations can be ordered to be run in another region for impartiality. If results agree with each other, there is no place for doubt then. But it also may happen, that experts of regional level differ in opinion and investigators have to order an examination at the Russian Federal Forensic Examination Center. There is only one such center so with all the work its experts have to do, the examination can take months.

Conclusions drawn by investigators and court are based on opinions of independent experts expressed over the course of several examinations, so there is no and can't be any negative tendency towards to putting doctors in jail.

At the same time, the Investigative Committee have deep respect to medical workers, realizing how responsible and important that humane profession is. When doctors become victims of crimes, the Investigative Committee responds immediately and protects them.

Spokesperson for the Investigative Committee Svetlana Petrenko

30 January 2018

Page address: <http://en.sledcom.ru/news/item/1199305>