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Charitable organizations as a new visible source of support for older people during the COVID-19 pandemic in Russia

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The activities of a third sector including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charity foundations, and voluntary associations have received a new impetus during the COVID-19 pandemic with their roles in supporting older people much widened compared to the time before the pandemic (Zobernyus et al. 2022).

Aim

The aim of the study was to identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the caregivers from the informal sector of Russia. The pandemic has changed the contribution of care from various actors: the share of care by charities, churches, and other aid agencies increased, while that of municipal services decreased.

Results

The results of the research in the Arctic province stated that care provision before and during the pandemic showed a decrease in assistance of 5.2% in formal health care and 13.2% in social services during the period of the imposed restrictions. There was also a 3.3% decrease in family care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Presumably, this was due to social distancing, self-isolation of older people, and a lack of personnel at social and health care institutions. At the same time, we noticed an increase in care during the pandemic provided by friends, neighbors, acquaintances (5.3%), and charitable organizations (16.4%).

We found that before the COVID-19 restrictions, Russian churches and charitable organizations were typically invisible in the system of social care for older people (0% before the pandemic), but their role increased to 2–6% during the pandemic