

## Grey Zone Healers

# Grey Zone Healers and the COVID?19 Pandemic in Chechnya, Russia

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The Chechen authorities' focus upon population health is enacted both through the principles of Islamic medicine and approved biomedical practices. Any healing practices beyond these domains are met with deep suspicion. Practitioners of unofficial complementary and alternative medicine healers may abruptly find themselves regarded as enemies of the state. In light of this precarious circumstance, it becomes pertinent to inquire: How do these healers employ their daily tactics to negotiate the intricate power dynamics between the formidable state apparatus and the established biomedical order? Drawing from our meticulous fieldwork conducted in the year 2021, we investigated the intricate tactics employed by unofficial healers in the Chechen medical landscape during COVID-19. Our research centred on discerning the nuanced tactics aimed at mitigating potential risks. We conclude that healers, having embodied tactics to creatively manoeuvre within the confines of the authoritarian state, perceived the challenges posed by COVID-19 as merely another, often inconsequential, obstacle in their enduring struggle.

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