

# Sanctions affecting 6 million patients in Iran: report

October 21 2012

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Some six million patients in Iran are affected by Western economic sanctions as import of medicine is becoming increasingly difficult, a governmental paper reported Sunday quoting a health official.

Sanctions imposed on Iran's [banking sector](#) "severely affected" the import of drugs and pharmaceutical devices for treatment of complex illnesses, the Iran Daily newspaper quoted Fatemeh Hashemi, head of the Foundation for Special Diseases, as saying.

The sanctions have seriously complicated banking transactions, causing a hike in prices, and even "shortage" in some sectors, even though they do not specifically target the sale of [medicine](#) and [medical equipment](#) to Iran, Hashemi said.

"We feel the shortage primarily for cancer and multiple sclerosis drugs. Of course, [Thalassemia](#) and [dialysis patients](#) are also the targets of these hardships," she was quoted as saying.

Her comments mark the first time that an Iranian official has linked the impact of Western sanctions to major public health problem in the Islamic republic.

Iran had repeatedly said before the summer that sanctions imposed over its disputed nuclear programme had little effect on the country.

Few media reports mentioned any effect on health, but to explain an

important increase in the price of medicine in the past two years.

"The price of domestically produced drugs has increased 15 to 20 percent during the past three months, and that of imported supplements by 20 to 80 percent," pharmacist Mohammad Hossein Hariri recently told the ISNA news agency.

"We risk a medicine crisis in the near future if officials do not address the production and import of medicine," he said.

According to the Iran Daily report, Hashemi sent a letter to UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon in August asking him to make a case to the West for "lifting the sanctions as they are political in nature and prove to the inexcusable detriment of patients in Iran."

Iran is under different rounds of sanctions designed by the United States, European Union and the UN Security Council to pressure it to curb its controversial nuclear programme.

Western powers suspect Tehran is using the programme to develop atomic weapons capability. Iran denies that and says its nuclear activities are purely peaceful.

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Citation: Sanctions affecting 6 million patients in Iran: report (2012, October 21) retrieved 23 April 2024 from

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