



## Turkish silicosis patient's operation canceled over accommodation fee

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Şükrü Kuş (R) was told the only way to at least prolong his life was to have a lung transplant. DHA photo

A Turkish silicosis patient failed to receive medical treatment abroad after the Social Insurance Administration, or SGK, refused to pay for his full treatment.

Şükrü Kuş, who was diagnosed with silicosis after working in a denim manufacturing firm between 2001 and 2004, failed to receive a scheduled lung transplant in Austria when the SGK refused to pay his accommodation expenses while at the hospital.

The SGK had agreed to cover all operation expenses, but Kuş was unable to undergo the operation at Vienna University's Medicine Faculty, as he could not provide 40,000 Turkish Liras for the room he was to stay in while being treated.

"I didn't even have 40 liras, let alone 40,000 liras. Although the SGK undertook at least 300,000 liras for my treatment, it would not cover the accommodation expenses; it just said 'We'll let you die,'" Kuş said Sunday, adding that he still could not understand why the administration had agreed to send him abroad if they were unwilling to fund the full cost of the treatment.

Kuş sent a letter to both the Prime Ministry and the Presidency, asking for help to pay the accommodation expenses at the Austrian hospital.

The patient said he received only an explanatory note from the SGK, which noted that the



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administration was able to pay the transportation expenses to take him to Vienna by a plane-ambulance, but was not responsible for paying for the accommodation, according to bilateral insurance agreements with its Austrian counterpart.

Kuş had to be sent abroad as lung transplants are not done in Turkey. After finding out he had silicosis in 2006, Kuş was told the only way to at least prolong his life, if not become completely cured, was to have a lung transplant.

The most common occupational lung disease in the world, silicosis is often contracted by workers engaged in sandblasting jeans without proper ventilation or protection. It is non-curable and can be fatal. According to medical reports from Turkey, sandblasting operators can develop an acute form of silicosis in just six to 24 months of work.