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Russia Develops 'Improved Replacement' for Banned Drug Meldonium

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Donat Sorokin / TASS

Russia's top sports scientists have developed a replacement for the banned performance-enhancing drug meldonium.

Vladimir Uiba, head of Russia's Federal Micro-Biological Agency (FMBA) told the TASS news agency on Wednesday that the new drug was "more effective by far" than the original."

Meldonium was classed as a banned substance for athletes by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) in January 2016. More than 100 Russian athletes were tested positive for the drug after the ban, including tennis superstar Maria Sharapova.

The drug, which was first developed in 1970, expands the arteries. WADA has argued that the increased blood flow could give athletes an unfair advantage by boosting the amount of oxygen flowing throughout the body.

The claim is disputed by a number of people and organizations, including the drug's

manufacturers.

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The announcement may concern sport's top sporting organizations, who have accused Russia of suffering from a culture of widespread, state-backed doping.

More that 111 Russian athletes were banned from the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janerio after WADA released a damning report into Russian doping.

The country's entire Paralympic squad was also excluded from the Games.

The Russian government has denied all of the allegations.

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