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Russia Reports First Imported Case of Chikungunya Fever

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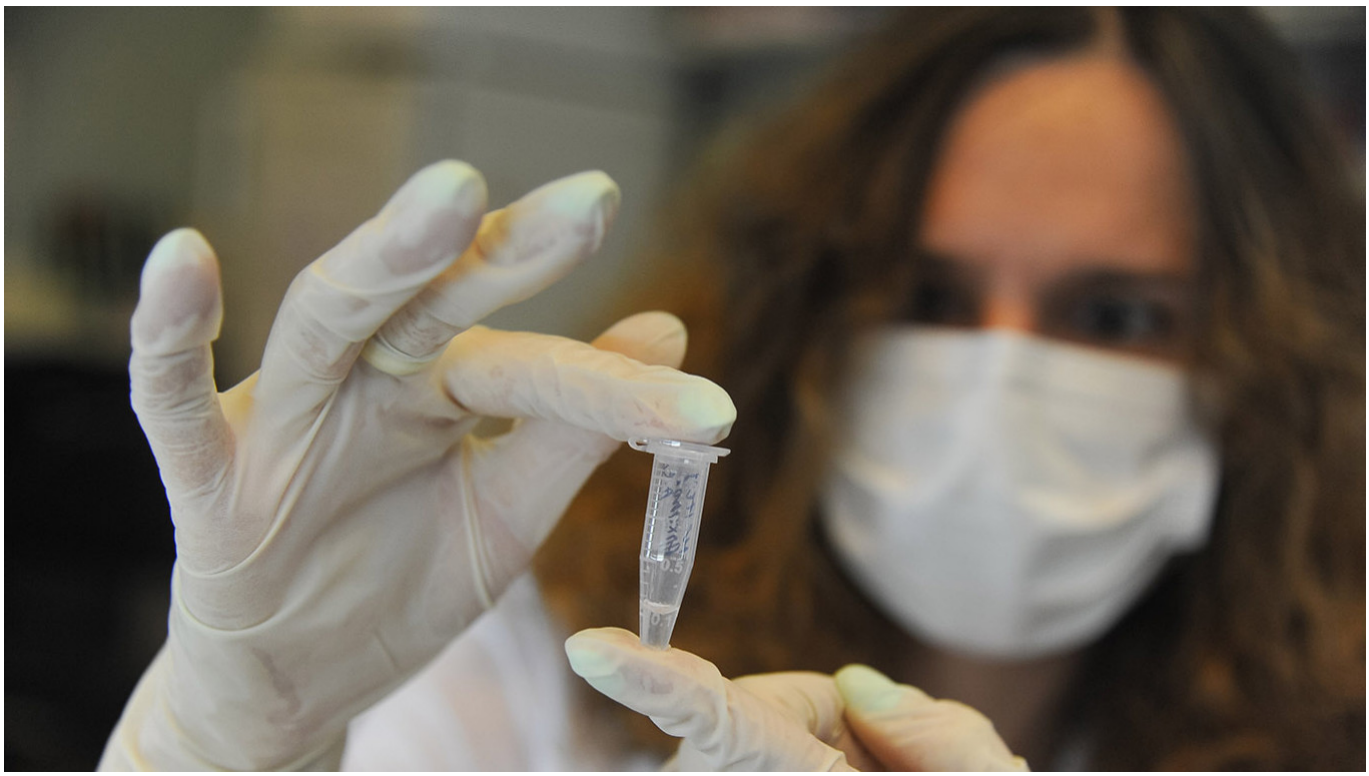

Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency

Russia recorded its first imported case of the mosquito-borne chikungunya disease, the consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor said Friday.

The patient, who returned to Moscow after a 10-day vacation in Sri Lanka, was initially hospitalized with suspected dengue fever but later tested positive for chikungunya, the agency said.

Chikungunya causes fever and severe joint pain, which can be debilitating and sometimes fatal. It is transmitted by the same Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus mosquitoes that spread dengue. The latter, also known as the tiger mosquito, is expanding northward as the Earth's climate warms.

Rospotrebnadzor said the virus poses no threat of spreading in Russia because it is not transmitted between people.

“At the moment, the number of fever-carrying mosquitoes in Russia does not pose an epidemiological threat,” the agency said in a statement.

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The tiger mosquito has spread to 16 European countries and 369 regions, up from 114 a decade ago, according to the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Europe has already recorded 27 chikungunya outbreaks this year, including its first locally acquired case in France’s Alsace region.

The World Health Organization has warned of a global resurgence of the virus comparable to the 2004-2005 epidemic that infected nearly half a million people. It has urged precautions such as using repellent and eliminating stagnant water where mosquitoes breed.

Nearly 8,000 cases were reported in southern China between late July and early August, prompting containment measures, according to local authorities.

AFP contributed reporting.

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