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Russian HIV/AIDS Pioneer Vadim Pokrovsky Dies at 71

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Vadim Pokrovsky. **Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency**

Epidemiologist and infectious disease specialist Vadim Pokrovsky, one of the country's leading experts on HIV/AIDS and a key figure in the Soviet and Russian response to the epidemic, has died at the age of 71, public health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor said Wednesday.

Pokrovsky led the specialized AIDS epidemiology and prevention laboratory at the Central Research Institute of Epidemiology under the Soviet Health Ministry and later Rospotrebnadzor until 2001. He then headed the Federal Scientific and Methodological Center for HIV Prevention and Control.

His work contributed to the identification of "patient zero" in the Soviet Union's first HIV outbreak and helped establish the methodology for a nationwide network of AIDS prevention and treatment centers.

"He stood at the forefront of the fight against HIV infection in our country, working with the first cases and outbreaks of the disease," Rospotrebnadzor said in an obituary.

No cause of death was disclosed.

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Pokrovsky remained an influential voice on Russia's HIV crisis, which accounts for 3.9% of all new HIV infections globally, well into his later years. He authored more than 700 scientific papers and books.

In December 2024, Pokrovsky estimated that 30,000 Russians would die early due to AIDS complications. A year later, his research indicated that the number of people living with HIV in Russia had grown to 1.25 million from 1.215 million the year prior.

Rospotrebnadzor said Pokrovsky's work helped mobilize Russian society in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic and noted that he had received multiple state honors.

"The scientific school he created is known not only in our country but throughout the world," Rospotrebnadzor said in its statement, adding that his students had carried out HIV research abroad and contributed to key HIV-related documents published by the World Health Organization and UNAIDS.

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