

Russia Says Checks Following Siberian Plague Lab Death Are Complete

By [Reuters](#)

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A satellite image showing the Anti-Plague Institute of Siberia and the Far East in Irkutsk. **Reuters**

Russia said on Thursday it had completed health checks on all the contacts of a deceased lab worker at a plague research facility in Siberia, signaling a desire to draw a line under the affair.

Statements from the state health watchdog and the regional governor said monitoring of all the dead woman's contacts had concluded, and reiterated that no dangerous pathogens had been found in nearly 5,000 samples.

"Amidst intense media scrutiny, the specialists thoroughly investigated the situation. It was a test, but we passed it in worthy fashion," Irkutsk Governor Igor Kobzev said.

Yet despite pressure from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United States, Russian authorities have yet to state definitively whether the death of 28-year-old lab worker

Darya Shipilova on Oct. 2 could have been caused by plague.

They have previously stated that she died from pneumonia but that the origin of the pneumonia had yet to be determined. They have also said she was appropriately vaccinated and that no microorganisms linked to her work were found in her body.

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On Wednesday, senior WHO official Maria Van Kerkhove said the global body wanted more information from Russia on what laboratory tests had been conducted, which pathogens were evaluated and that "if this individual didn't die from plague, then how did she die?"

Russia says it has provided full information to the WHO according to established procedures.

Global health officials — as well as the world's media — have been particularly alert to pneumonia cases of undetermined cause since the Covid-19 pandemic, which began with a cluster of fast-spreading fatal respiratory illness in China.

However, the cause of individual pneumonia cases can often not be determined.

The lung infection can have a variety of causes other than plague, including other bacterial infections or viral respiratory diseases, such as Covid or flu.

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