

Smallpox virus found in NIH storage ressurecting concerns over sample management

Vials of the virus that causes smallpox were found in a National Institutes of Health research building that was unequipped and unapproved to handle the deadly pathogen, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Because it's so infectious, the smallpox virus is considered a bioterrorism threat and is only permitted in two labs in the world: One at the CDC's Atlanta headquarters and another at the VECTOR Institute in Russia. The newly discovered vials violate an international agreement reached in 1979 aimed at keeping the virus eradicated while allowing some scientists to continue studying it.

The vials were found in a cold storage room in the Bethesda, Maryland, research building. It's unclear how long they had been in the storage room, which is kept at 5 degrees Celsius. But the boxes holding them may date back to the 1950s, according to CDC spokesman Tom Skinner.

"At the end of the day, we don't know why [the vials] showed up," Skinner said, adding that the samples do not pose any threat to public health.

Read the full, original story: [Vials of Smallpox Virus Found in Unapproved Maryland Lab](#)