

Russia Can Keep Smallpox

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GENEVA — A decision on when to destroy the last known stocks of live smallpox was put off for a further three years at a contentious World Health Organization meeting, with Iran spearheading opposition to a U.S.- and Russian-backed plan to postpone setting a date for destruction for five years.

Iran was at the forefront of countries arguing this week at the annual World Health Assembly in Geneva for the stocks held in Russia and the United States to be destroyed now. Its arguments included the risk of stockpiles falling into the wrong hands and that technology existed to create vaccines and anti-viral drugs without access to the live variola virus. The United States said further research was needed into vaccines against the disease. Twenty-seven countries backed its position, compared with seven behind Iran.

(Reuters)

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