



FORTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

WHA49.10

Agenda item 18.1

25 May 1996

Smallpox eradication - destruction of variola virus stocks

The Forty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Noting that on 8 May 1980 the Thirty-third World Health Assembly in resolution WHA33.3 declared the global eradication of smallpox;

Noting further that resolution WHA33.4 endorsed recommendations for the post-eradication era which specified that remaining stocks of variola virus should be held at only a limited number of sites, and that the stock of variola virus has since been reduced and restricted to the WHO collaborating centre on smallpox and other poxvirus infections designated at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA, and the Russian State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology, Koltsovo, Novosibirsk Region, Russian Federation;

Recognizing that sequence information on the genome of several variola virus strains and the cloned DNA fragments of genome of variola virus allow scientific questions about the properties of the viral genes and proteins to be solved as well as any problem with diagnosis of suspected smallpox, and that the escape of variola virus from laboratories would be a serious risk as an increasing proportion of the population lack immunity to smallpox,

RECOMMENDS that the remaining stocks of variola virus, including all whitepox viruses, viral genomic DNA, clinical specimens and other material containing infectious variola virus, should be destroyed on 30 June 1999 after a decision has been taken by the Health Assembly, that being a moratorium of five-and-a-half years from the deadline of 31 December 1993 proposed by the ad hoc committee on orthopoxvirus infections, with a view to taking action to achieve a broader consensus.

Sixth plenary meeting, 25 May 1996
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