



Laboratory ▶ Incident in a laboratory in Catalonia

The death of a scientist due to possible negligence is being investigated in Barcelona

The researcher explained to his colleagues that he had symptoms of the disease he was investigating

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY
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The death of a scientist almost a year ago has put the control and operation protocols of laboratories where various microorganisms are investigated and manipulated into focus. The victim, a biochemist hired by the CIBER-Institute of Health Carlos III, worked researching Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), an unknown neurodegenerative condition with which he may have been in contact at a center at the Hospitalet Faculty of Medicine from Llobregat, from the UB. It was then that the researcher became infected and ended up dying, not without first having commented to his colleagues that he was suffering from some of the symptoms produced by the strange disease.

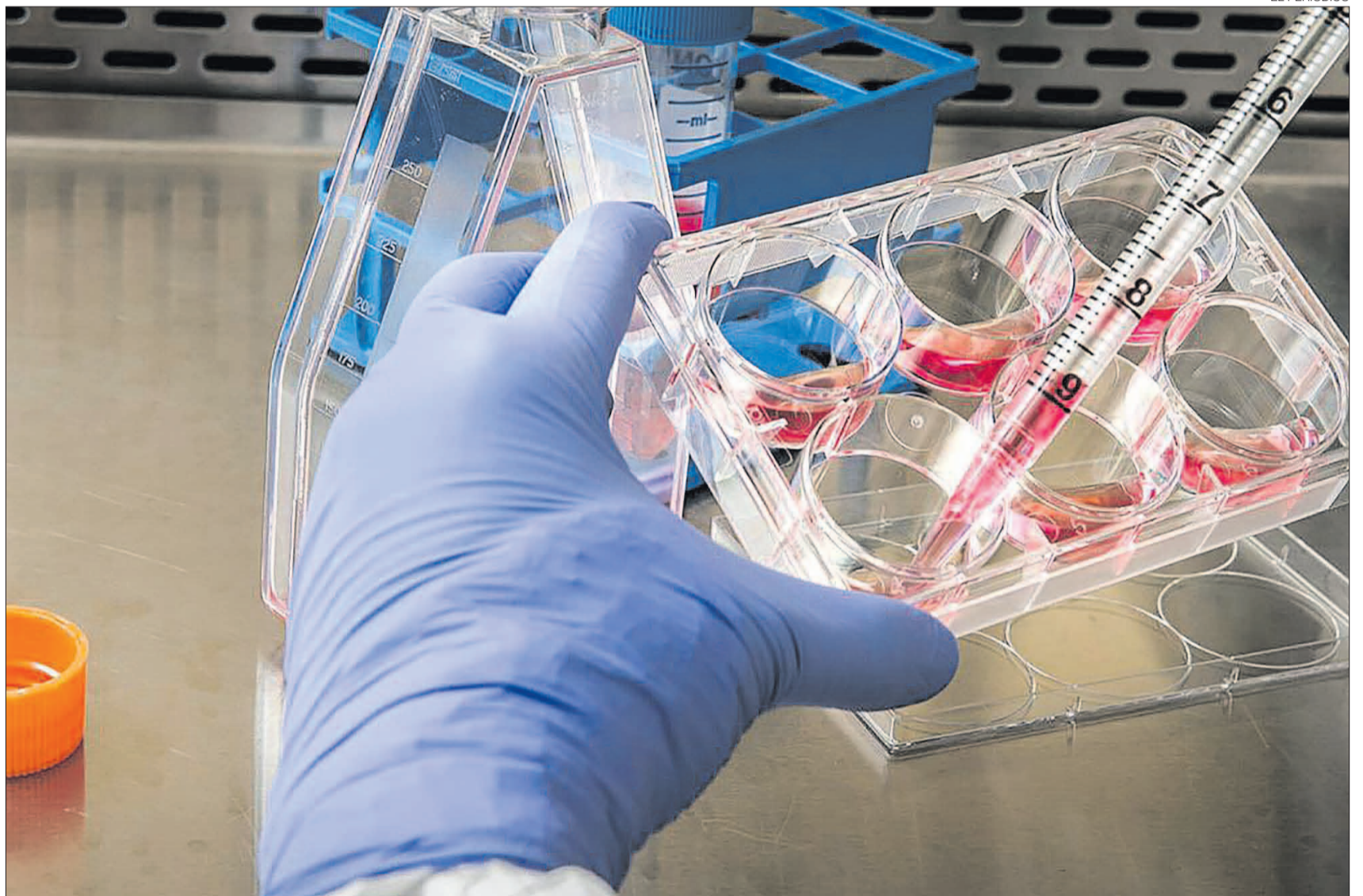
This scientist was part of the Be-

The Grifols P3 laboratory in Ordino «would entail significant risks for the Andorran population»

lvitge Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBELL), which last Thursday reported in a statement that, in addition to «losing a dear member of its scientific community», they had found in a laboratory «samples unauthorized of potentially dangerous prions».

However, the three entities involved—UB, CIBER and IDIBELL—declared that they are currently investigating the facts. From the Bellvitge company, the situation was immediately addressed, with an action by the three involved. The investigation, however, remains open.

For their part, the Spanish media point to a hypothetical error in the protocols when handling the samples, apart from finding thousands



▶ A scientist experimenting with cells in a laboratory.

of unauthorized samples in a freezer in laboratory 4141, where the biochemist who lost his life worked.

Finally, the statement states that the «campus where this laboratory is located does not have the necessary facilities to carry out experiments with this type of samples».

In the case of Andorra / In the Principality, the interest of the Grifols company to build a P3 type laboratory in the parish of Ordino has been known for a couple of years. This type of laboratory focuses its research essentially on immu-

nology. The citizen platform anti-Grifols has expressed its disagreement several times regarding the creation of the laboratory. In a manifesto published last March 18th, the platform warned of «the significant risks for workers and the population that this type of laboratory entails.»

In addition, they condemn «the existing health risks of working with poisonous animals and potentially deadly microorganisms». They also affirmed that «the possibility of leaks of poten-

tially deadly biological material is a risk that must be considered and managed», and added that «in the event of an accident, biological contamination, in addition to affecting the population Andorra, could also affect neighboring countries».

It should be noted that Grifols states that the main idea of the P3 laboratory proposed in Ordino is to carry out immunological research, but the platform points out that «it is necessary to know specifically what type of research they

would carry out, in addition to the risks that could be associated».

On the other hand, it is not only the anti-Grifols platform that is against the construction of the laboratory, since in the last general elections this issue was already on the table. In fact, EL PERIÒDIC already explained that in the past Ordino parish debate held a few days before the 2A, the previous PS + X'Ordino candidate, Jean Michel Armengol, stated that «it is one of the least clear projects of the democratic legislature». ≡

keys

1 UB, CIBER and IDIBELL: the three involved

Although the three involved are collaborating in the investigation that the UB started three months ago and that the accident was now a year ago, none of the three entities has mentioned the disease or the risks involved in the possible biological leak to the rest of the workers.

2 protocols failed?

The strict protocols are being investigated, especially those involving an action of high biological risk. Sometimes these may not be well defined or implemented, which puts the spotlight on a flawed assumption in laboratory protocols 4141.

3 symptoms compatible with CJD

Despite requesting leave in 2020 due to illness, the scientist did not specify what the cause was. However, he explained to his colleagues that he had some of the symptoms of the neurodegenerative disease he was researching.

4 dangers for the inhabitants

Research laboratories, especially those that handle biological material as is the case at the University of Barcelona, represent a high risk of contagion for the neighbors and territories that are part of the environment where the research center is located.

5 a proposed P3 laboratory in Andorra

The construction of a P3 research laboratory, those working with potentially deadly microorganisms, by Grifols, has encouraged debate in the Principality regarding the potential risk and effects it would involve on the Andorran population.

Dolsa, Bringué and Armengol, united against the laboratory P3

They denounce the wrongdoing of the Government in the matter of Grifols

EL PERIÒDIC
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY

As reported by this media a week ago, Enric Dolsa, Jordina Bringué and Jean-Michel Armengol will run together in the municipal elections next December 17th in Ordino. One of the main issues for which they have decided to join forces is to fight against the installation of the Grifols P3 laboratory in the Ordino parish.

It is known that Enric Dolsa has been opposed to this laboratory for years and says that «it does not bring anything positive to the country and, in addition, it is a very serious health hazard for Ordino and for Andorra». And for all those who have called all the criticism of Grifols' arrival in Andorra demagoguery, Dolsa replies that «it is no longer demagoguery but a fact, and the accidents that have occurred in this type of laboratories prove it», emphasizing what happened a year ago at the Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute (IDIBELL).

From the coalition they also denounce the «bad behavior of the Government in this matter», since they assure that «there are things that are being carried out in secret». For this reason, they ask for more clarity and to explain to the public what the installation of a P3 laboratory in Ordino entails. «Who will control these investigations?», the three ask themselves.

Both Dolsa and Bringué and Jean-Michel Armengol have always been against the arrival of the laboratory in the parish. In the debate of the last national elections, Bringué already denounced that «in the laboratory manipulation of live animals, viruses and other high-risk pathological agents will be carried out». He also expressed his dismay at «the eventual contamination of the water that will be used in the facilities».

In this line, Jean-Michel Armengol expressed himself in the same debate, criticizing that «the location of the heliport was changed several

times due to opposing opinions, but no consultation has been made with the citizens or the country about the project from the Grifols P3 laboratory»

On this aspect of the popular consultation, all three state in statements to EL PERIÒDIC that they did not want to let the people vote, even though it was requested on several occasions. Dolsa, Bringué and Jean-Michel Armengol consider that the reason for not having held a popular consultation is that the Democratic Government knows that the vast majority of the population would vote against it and they are not interested.

In fact, in Ordino there are many voices against the laboratory, and this was made evident in the demonstrations called by the anti-Grifols citizen platform. The protests organized by this group of citizens focus on the danger posed to the environment by having a project like this and more so in a parish like Ordino, the only one de-

clared a Biosphere Reserve by Unesco. They also emphasize that these reserves are territories that aim to harmonize the conservation of biological and cultural diversity and economic and social development through the relationship of people with nature.

Asked about this platform, the three Ordino leaders emphasize that if the project were to be carried out, it would be the first P3 laboratory located in a Biosphere Reserve. Regarding this aspect, Jean-Michel Armengol explained that «it is curious that, being now the third anniversary of Ordino as a Biosphere Reserve and that November 3rd is the World Day of Biosphere Reserves, we continue with all this senseless schizophrenia of wanting to protect the environment, but at the same time install a laboratory of these characteristics in Ordino».

In relation to the events that took place in the laboratory of the Biomedical Research Institute of Bellvitge (IDIBELL), Bringué emphasizes that «it has been proven that no matter how much control there is, there can be negligence or accidents, and that even deaths can occur in these spaces». Jean-Michel Armengol adds that «we cannot have any confidence in these laboratories and, unlike what has been said on numerous occasions, zero risk does not exist, and that is obvious».

Dolsa states that he is still waiting for a response from Justice. We recall that the councilor of the Municipality of Ordino filed an appeal with the Superior Administrative Court claiming the nullity of the members' agreement for breach of the law and the subsequent agreements which, according to Dolsa, also breach the regulations. Because as he stated when he presented the appeal, he is ready to go to Strasbourg.

At this point, the three Ordino politicians ask themselves «what need does Andorra have to have this laboratory? It is in deficit, Grifols has requested the land at zero cost, the infrastructures must be built, what had been budgeted had to be expanded and, in addition, the patents will be for Ireland and not for Andorra». ≡



ENRIC DOLSA

«The Grifols P3 laboratory must be stopped by the citizens of the parish with a public consultation»



JORDINA BRINGUÉ

«It has been proven that as much as there are controls there can be negligence and deaths can occur»



JEAN-MICHEL ARMENGOL

«We cannot have any confidence in this laboratory and, unlike what has been said, zero risk does not exist»