South Africa records first cholera death in over a decade
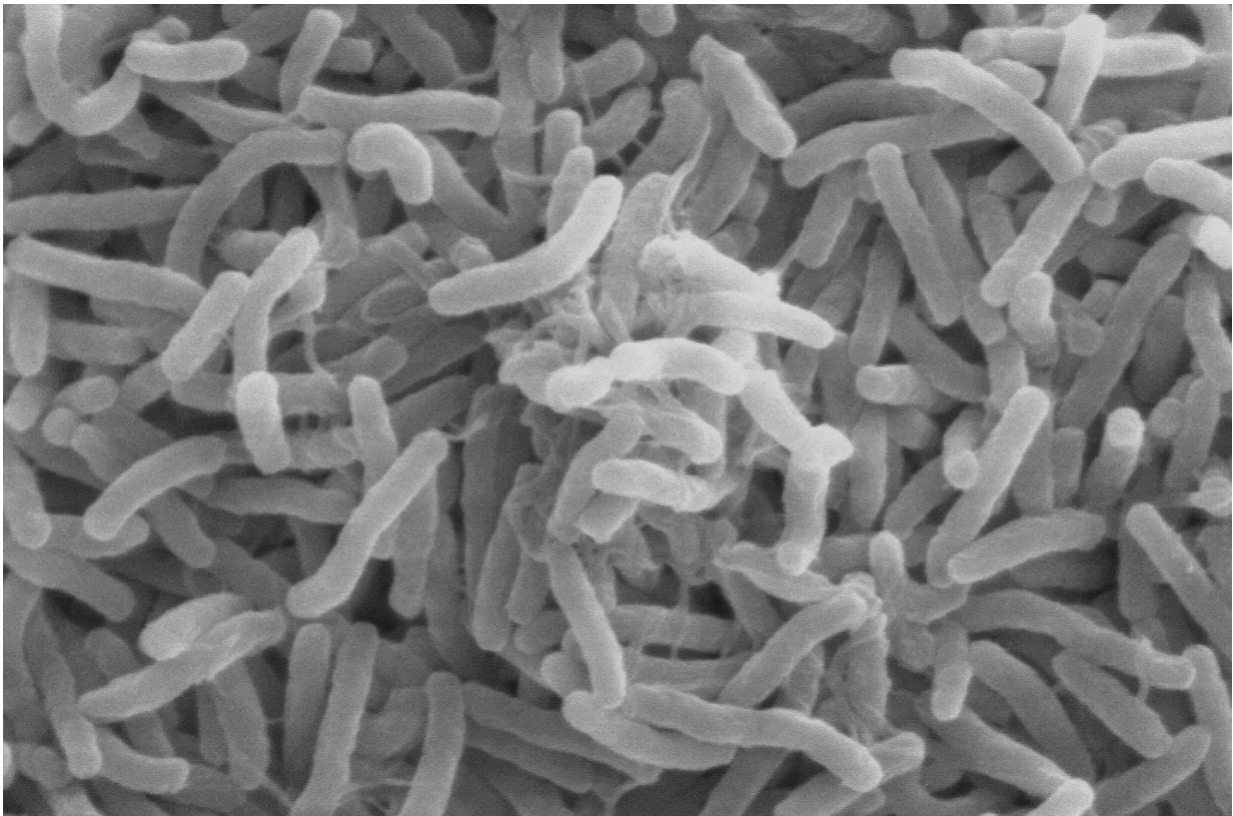
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Scanning electron microscope image of Vibrio cholerae. Credit: Wikipedia

South African health authorities on Thursday announced the country's first cholera death in more than a decade.

Cholera is not endemic in South Africa, which has since early February recorded five cases.

The first two of those were imported from Malawi which is buckling under its deadliest cholera outbreak in decades.

The victim in South Africa is a 24-year-old man from Benoni, a district east of Johannesburg.

He had no history of travel outside the country and died in hospital on Sunday, according to a statement from Health Minister Joe Phaahla's office.

Laboratory results later confirmed he had [cholera](link).

South Africa last suffered an outbreak of the waterborne disease between 2008 and 2009, when around 12,000 cases were recorded after a huge outbreak in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

This time the disease spread from Malawi where at least 1,400 people have died out of nearly 45,000 cases reported since March 2022, according to the United Nations.

Other southern African countries including Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe recently recorded cases.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters two weeks ago that there were 23 countries experiencing [cholera outbreaks](link), with a further 20 nations that share land borders with them at risk.

Cholera, which causes diarrhoea and vomiting, is contracted from a bacterium that is generally transmitted through contaminated food or

water.

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