



Personalities



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Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky — outstanding Russian leprologist-pathologist

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the life and creative path of an outstanding Russian scientist, leprologist-pathologist, organizer and educator, one of the founders of Russian bacteriology, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky, who was born on December 28 (new style), 1865 in the village of Ovchukhi, Vladimir district, Vladimir province, in the family of a priest. Vasily studied at the Vladimir Theological Seminary. In 1886 he graduated from the Shuisky Men's Gymnasium, and in 1891 from the Medical Faculty of the Imperial Moscow University with a degree in medicine with honors. After graduating from the university, Vasily Ivanovich was left at the Department of Pathological Anatomy under the supervision of Professors I.F. Klein and M.N. Nikiforov, and in 1896 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on the topic "Conditions of oxygen life of anaerobic bacteria" and in the same year he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine. The scientist's career development included various professional activities, and V.I. Kedrovsky was awarded significant achievements and awards for his scientific and pedagogical work. The culture of *Mycobacterium leprosy* obtained by him is *M. kedrovsky*, known as the "Kedrovsky culture", became one of the most sought-after strains in international leprology. On his initiative, in 1926, the leprosy sector was established at the Central Institute of Tropical Medicine of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR and in the same year he became a member of the International Association of Leprologists. V.I. Kedrovsky is the author of more than 50 scientific papers devoted to the experimental study of the epidemiology and pathological anatomy of leprosy and tuberculosis. He was a scientist who was not afraid to go against the flow, ask difficult questions and look for answers to them. He was distinguished by his high integrity, organizational talent, broad erudition as a bacteriologist and pathologist, and brilliantly mastered bacteriological and histological techniques. V.I. Kedrovsky died on December 3, 1937 in Moscow at the age of 72.

Keywords: Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky, Russian scientist, leprologist-pathologist, the founder of Russian bacteriology, organizer, educator

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Персоналии

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Василий Иванович Кедровский — выдающийся отечественный лепролог-патолог

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Резюме. Статья посвящена жизненному и творческому пути выдающегося отечественного ученого, лепролога-патолога, организатора и педагога, одного из основоположников российской бактериологии, доктора медицинских наук, профессора Василия Ивановича Кедровского, родившегося 28 декабря (по новому стилю) 1865 г. в селе Овчухи Владимирского уезда Владимирской губернии в семье священника. Василий учился во Владимирской духовной семинарии. В 1886 г. окончил Шуйскую мужскую гимназию, а в 1891 г. — медицинский факультет Императорского Московского университета со степенью лекаря с отличием. После окончания университета Василий Иванович был оставлен при кафедре патологической анатомии под руководством профессоров И.Ф. Клейна и М.Н. Никифорова, а в 1896 г. успешно защитил докторскую диссертацию на тему «Условия кислородной жизни анаэробных бактерий», и в этом же году ему была присуждена степень доктора медицины. Карьерный рост ученого включал различные профессиональные виды деятельности, и за свою научно-педагогическую работу В.И. Кедровский отмечен существенными достижениями и наградами. Полученная им культура микобактерий лепры *M.kedrowsky*, известная как «культура Кедровского», стала одним из наиболее востребованных штаммов в международной лепрологии. По его инициативе в 1926 г. был создан лепрозный сектор при Центральном институте тропической медицины Наркомздрава РСФСР, и в этом же году ученый стал членом Международной ассоциации лепрологов. В.И. Кедровский — автор более 50 научных трудов, посвященных экспериментальному изучению эпидемиологии и патологической анатомии лепры и туберкулеза. Он был ученым, который не боялся идти против течения, задавать сложные вопросы и искать на них ответы. Его отличали высокая принципиальность, организаторский талант, широкая эрудиция бактериолога и патологоанатома, блестящее владение бактериологической и гистологической техникой. В.И. Кедровский скончался 3 декабря 1937 г. в Москве на 72-м году жизни.

Ключевые слова: Василий Иванович Кедровский, отечественный ученый, лепролог-патолог, основоположник российской бактериологии, организатор, педагог

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December 28, 2025 marked the 160th anniversary of the birth of an outstanding Russian scientist, leprologist-pathologist, organizer and educator, one of the founders of Russian bacteriology, Doctor of Medical Sciences, Professor Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky (Fig. 1, 2) [1].

Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky was born on December 28 (according to the Gregorian calendar) 1865 in the village of Ovchukhi, Vladimir district, Vladimir province¹, into the family of priest Ivan Nikolaevich Kedrovsky (1833–1869) and mother Mariya Valerievna Klyuchareva (1843–?)^{2, 3}.

Vasily studied at the Vladimir Theological Seminary, but in 1884 he was expelled for participating in the so-called “seminary riot”, and in 1886 he graduated from the Shuisky Men’s Gymnasium and immediately enrolled in the law faculty of the Imperial Moscow University (IMU), already in the 1st semester he transferred to the medical faculty, from which he graduated with a degree in medicine with honors in 1891. After graduation, Vasily Ivanovich was left at the Department of Pathological Anatomy (PA) under the supervision of professors I.F. Klein and M.N. Nikiforov, who should rightfully be considered his teachers, and in 1896 he successfully defended his doctoral dissertation on “Conditions of oxygen life of anaerobic bacteria” and in the same year he was awarded the degree of doctor medicine [2].

The career growth of V.I. Kedrovsky included the following professional activities^{4, 5} [3, 4]: from 1892 to 1893, he worked as a super-senior laboratory assistant, and from November 1893 to 1898, he was a supernumerary assistant to the dissector at the Department of PA IMU. In March 1898, he was appointed a privatdozent with a course in medical bacteriology at the Department of PA IMU, where he worked until 1902. From March 1902 to 1910, he was a dissector and associate professor of pathological histology. In December 1910, he was appointed director of the G.N. Gabrichevsky Bacteriological Institute at the IMU, serving in this position until 1914, while continuing to teach at the IMU. From March 1914 to 1916 — he was a



Fig. 1. Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky. Hroniki. URL: <https://hroniki.org/events/397> (accessed: 05/21/2026)



Fig. 2. Kedrovsky Vasily Ivanovich. Wikipedia. URL: https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Кедровский,_Василий_Иванович (accessed: 05/21/2026)

¹ This date corresponds to the metric certificate, which states that he was born in the village of Ovchukhi, Vladimir district; in one of the questionnaires, Kedrovsky indicated the village of Vishenki, Suzdal District, as his place of birth; however, some sources indicate the date of birth of V.I. Kedrovsky as December 30, 1865. Citation by: Kedrovsky Vasily Ivanovich, biographies and discoveries — RUWIKI. URL: https://ru.ruwiki.ru/wiki/Кедровский,_Василий_Иванович (accessed: 25/01/2026).

² Ivan Nikolaevich Kedrovsky. GEDCOM. URL: <https://gedcom.vgd.ru/?fid=018a59c267a314ec44872&id=I500379> (accessed: 23/01/2026).

³ Mariya Valerievna Klyuchareva. GEDCOM. URL: <https://gedcom.vgd.ru/?fid=018a59c267a314ec44872&id=I500378> (accessed: 23/01/2026).

⁴ Pathological anatomy in Russia. Moscow School of Pathologists. URL: <https://studfile.net/preview/467871/page/5/> (accessed: 23/01/2026).

⁵ Krylov-Tolstikov A.N. Russian doctors A–K new edition. Russian doctors of the XIX — early XX centuries. The Russian medical world of the XIX — early XX centuries. Short medical biographical dictionary. 11.06.2017. URL: <https://proza.ru/2017/06/11/309> (accessed: 27/01/2026).

supernumerary extraordinary professor in the same place, in June 1916 he was a full-time professor, from 1916 to 1918 he was the head of the Department of PA IMU, an ordinary professor in this department. Being a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, Vasily Ivanovich did not accept the revolution of 1917 and in 1918 was removed from the leadership of the PA department. From 1918 to 1924, he was a professor of PA at the Higher Medical School, from where he moved to the 2nd Moscow State University in 1924. Since 1925, V.I. Kedrovsky held the position of head of the Morphological Department of the Institute of Experimental Endocrinology of the People’s Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR, and from 1925 to 1927, Head of the pathoanatomic and bacteriological laboratories at the Moscow Neuropsychiatric Institute,



From 1926 to 1937, he worked as the head of the leprosy department of the Central Institute of Tropical Medicine of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR. At the same time, after retiring in 1933–1935, he was a scientific consultant at the Central Tuberculosis Institute.

V.I. Kedrovsky's scientific interests were primarily issues of microbiology, epidemiology and pathological anatomy of leprosy and tuberculosis.

V.I. Kedrovsky has been awarded the following achievements and awards for his scientific and pedagogical work¹ [5–10]: presented in 1913 at the All-Russian Hygienic Exhibition, where many exhibits on leprosy were shown, the works of V.I. Kedrovsky were awarded a gold medal; in 1915, he was awarded the title of professor; hereditary honorary citizen; V.I. Kedrovsky, as an outstanding bacteriologist, received the title of Honored Scientist. V.I. Kedrovsky was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1933. This means that his contribution was noticed and appreciated at the highest level. Unfortunately, for various reasons, this high award passed him by.

V.I. Kedrovsky was the first to prove that bacteria are not static organisms, they are changeable, their properties depend on the environmental conditions in which they themselves are located. It was a revolutionary discovery that changed the understanding of microbiology and opened up new ways to understand the mechanisms of development of infectious diseases, as well as helped save the lives of countless people. A special place in the scientist's work was occupied by the study of leprosy, one of the most mysterious and stigmatized diseases of the past.

Vasily Ivanovich achieved outstanding results: he was the first in the world to obtain an experimental model of leprosy in animals. This allowed for more in-depth studies of the pathogenesis of the disease, and the search for new diagnostic and treatment methods. V.I. Kedrovsky made a significant contribution to the study of the mechanisms of transmission of leprosy and its epidemiology, which was critically important for the development of prevention and control measures.

He was a scientist who was not afraid to go against the flow, ask difficult questions and look for answers to them. He was distinguished by his high integrity, brought to exceptional scrupulousness, organizational talent, broad erudition as a bacteriologist and pathologist, brilliantly mastered bacteriological and histological techniques, the ability to combine deep theoretical research with work on practical issues, thoroughness in experimental work, worked tirelessly in the scientific and pedagogical field, was distinguished by great depth of thought, dedication.

In 1890, V.I. Kedrovsky's research "On the artificial breeding of leprosy" brought world fame. The main idea of his work is as follows: the causative agents of leprosy and tuberculosis are complexly organized fungi such as *Streptothrix* or *Actinomyces*. Morphologically, they are very variable and, under certain conditions, can lose all their classical properties (acid resistance, growth pattern in laboratory media, etc.), passing into the form of acid-resistant diphtheria or even a template "banal" actinomycete. The scientist was one of the first to obtain such an "atypical" culture of the causative agent of leprosy in laboratory media and, having passed it through the rabbit's body, isolated a "stick" of leprosy with all its classical properties, which caused it in the internal organs of animals (rabbits and mice) the changes characteristic of leprosy.

In 1910, Vasily Ivanovich used this experience to prove for the first time the possibility of inoculating leprosy in animals (see the list of some scientific works by V.I. Kedrovsky in chronological order). He paid great attention to the problems of bacteriology, and for the first time in the world he cultivated the causative agent of leprosy outside the body. The classic experience of V.I. Kedrovsky consisted in the isolation of partially acid-resistant microorganisms on an artificial nutrient medium, morphologically similar to the causative agent of human leprosy, which acquired acid resistance when infected with this rabbit culture. For the first time, the author expressed the idea of a complex cycle of development of the causative agent of leprosy outside the human body. When trying to infect laboratory animals with an acid-resistant culture isolated from a leprosy patient, V.I. Kedrovsky in 1902, and subsequently his colleagues in 1905, observed the transition of acid-resistant mycobacteria to acid-resistant ones. V.I. Kedrovsky was the first to point out that the concept of acid resistance is rather arbitrary. The culture of *Mycobacterium leprosy* obtained by V.I. Kedrovsky M.kedrovsky (white and pink variants), known as the "Kedrovsky culture", has become one of the most sought-after strains in international leprology. This was explained by its morphological and biochemical proximity to *Mycobacterium leprosy*, taken directly from the patient. In his first experiments, V.I. Kedrovsky obtained leprosy-like foci containing acid-resistant mycobacteria from rabbits. V.I. Kedrovsky injected rabbits with "leprosy bacilli lines" from the patient's node intracranially. Infiltrates from epithelioid cells appeared in the soft membrane of the spinal cord. In larger cells, protoplasm was illuminated, mycobacteria were detected, which "...in their external form were completely similar to leprosy or tuberculosis". In the course of the capillaries, the infiltrates penetrated into the brain. As a result of the culture of *Mycobacterium leprosy* through the body of rabbits, their acid resistance was completely restored.

¹ Kedrovsky Vasily Ivanovich, Russian Bacteriologist. Russian Soil. URL: https://vk.com/wall-57594061_41770?ysclid=ml8edxx63d859001570 (accessed: 03/02/2026).



Fig. 3. Kedrovsky Vasily Ivanovich. Ckorbim.com. A plaque with the inscription visible on it "Professor Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky". URL: http://skorbim.com/мемориал/кедровский_василий_иванович.html (accessed: 22/01/2026)

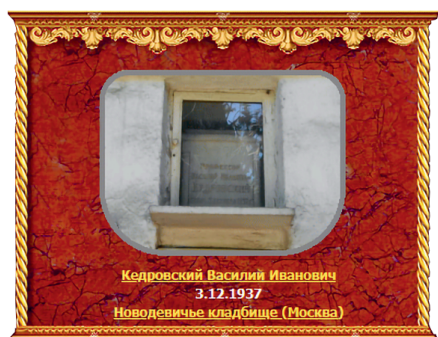


Fig. 4. Kedrovsky Vasily Ivanovich. Ckorbim.com. A plaque marking the date of death and the place of burial. URL: http://skorbim.com/мемориал/кедровский_василий_иванович.html (accessed 22/01/2026)

On the initiative of V.I. Kedrovsky, the leprosy sector at the Tropical Institute was established in 1926 and in the same year he became a member of the International Association of Leprologists.

V.I. Kedrovsky is the author of more than 50 scientific papers devoted mainly to the experimental study of the epidemiology and pathological anatomy of leprosy and tuberculosis.

His motto (credo) was perseverance and patience, and Vasily Ivanovich's cherished dream was the complete elimination of leprosy in the next 20–30 years.

V.I. Kedrovsky died on December 3, 1937 in Moscow at the age of 72. He was buried at the Novodevichy Cemetery in Moscow (the ashes are kept in columbarium 39-3-1). The images show a memorial plaque with the inscription "Professor Vasily Ivanovich Kedrovsky", which marks the date of death as December 3, 1937, and the burial place as Novodevichy Cemetery (Fig. 3, 4) [11–13].

LIST OF SOME SCIENTIFIC WORKS OF V.I. KEDROVSKY IN CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

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ПЕРЕЧЕНЬ НЕКОТОРЫХ НАУЧНЫХ ТРУДОВ В.И. КЕДРОВСКОГО В ХРОНОЛОГИЧЕСКОЙ ПОСЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬНОСТИ

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The author read and approved the final version before publication.

Competing interests. The author declares the absence of obvious and potential conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article.

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