

Pharmaceutical factory linked to drug death shut down

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A traditional Chinese medicine factory in northeast China has been shut down as part of an investigation into the death of a patient who died after being injected with one of its products.

Wang Shugui, chairman and general manager of Wusuli River Pharmacy, told Xinhua Sunday that his company's Jiamusi factory was shut Thursday.

"We are also considering a recall of the 'Shuanghuanglian' injection drug," said Wang. "Right now, we are going all out to cooperate with experts who are in the Jiamusi factory doing inspections."

Feng Min, chief of the small-capacity injection workshop at the factory, said Saturday that she did not expect such an incident could happen at her factory.

"More than 240 workers went home Thursday, and the factory remained closed," said Feng, who added she was shocked by the incident.

"I hope related departments could find out as soon as possible where the problems occurred," she said.

The Ministry of Health and the State Food and Drug Administration said Thursday they received reports from concerned departments in northwest China's Qinghai Province complaining two batches of the herbal injection made by the Jiamusi factory -- 0809028 and 0808030 -- had caused adverse effects on three patients and the death of one of them in the province. They therefore ordered hospitals and chemists to suspend the use and sales of the injections produced by the Jiamusi factory.

Heilongjiang Provincial Food and Drug Administration Sunday confirmed samples from two problematic batches of the injection made by Jiamusi factory were sent for lab work at Heilongjiang Provincial Institute for Drug Control. Date for the test results is yet to be announced.

The patients, all from Datong county in the suburbs of Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai, developed fevers and breathing difficulties Wednesday after being injected with the drug.

One of the patients, a 62-year-old woman, whose identity remains unknown, died on Feb.10. The other victims were reported to be in critical condition as of Saturday at the Qinghai People's Hospital.

Health, food and drug authorities in Qinghai began to recall the above-mentioned two batches of the injection made by Jiamusi factory Feb.11, and seized 44,910 cartons of the problematic injection by 6 p.m. Feb.12, according to statistics given by Qinghai Provincial Food and Drug Administration.

Heilongjiang Province, where the Jiamusi factory is located, reported Saturday that three more people fell ill in the province after being injected with the herbal Shuanghuanglian injection drug.

The patients used Shuanghuanglian to cure a cold and developed "normal adverse reactions", according to Li Jun, spokesman of Heilongjiang Provincial Food and Drug Department.

They had no life-threatening symptoms, said Li, who refused to specify on the identities of the patients, the drug's producer or the dates of the injections.

Normal adverse reactions include a rash, difficulty breathing, localized pain, or shock. Severe reactions may lead to death, according to the directions of a Shuanghuanglian producer.

Lu Zhongjun, chief of Heilongjiang Provincial Center for Monitoring Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR), reaffirmed Sunday the injections which sickened the three people in Heilongjiang were not produced by the Jiamusi factory.

Apart from Qinghai and Heilongjiang, no similar cases have been reported in other parts of the country.

Shuanghuanglian injections are used to treat fever and coughs caused by colds.