

China's vaccine for polio receives approval

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Singapore: The China Food and Drug Administration made an announcement that China's top drug authority has licensed a domestically manufactured polio vaccine for administration. Under the country's national vaccination program, around 16 million children are required to receive the oral polio vaccine (OPV) annually.

In extremely rare cases, the vaccine itself has the risk of subjecting the recipient to polio infection as the vaccine has live attenuated virus. However the new vaccine developed by the Institute of Medical Biology of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences in Kunming, Yunnan province, has inactivated polio virus and hence is free of side effects.

"The new vaccine, marketed under the brand name Ai Bi Wei, poses no risk of vaccine-associated paralytic polio," said Mr Lance Rodewald, team leader of the WHO China Office Expanded Program on Immunization. Global experience has shown IPV to be safe and effective and "eventually all use of OPV will be ended in China and the world", Mr Rodewald said. "However, there will be a few years in which both IPV and OPV are likely to be used together."

Mr Bernhard Schwartlander, the WHO representative in China, said, "This new vaccine is a critically important weapon in the fight against polio as the world nears the eradication of this dreaded disease. The Chinese production of quality IPV is a breakthrough in the fight to sustain China's polio-free status and to eradicate polio from the world."