

Dengue vaccination programme gets suspended in Philippines

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The Philippines department of health has halted the use of Dengvaxia since last week. Philippines has ordered an investigation into the immunisation of more than 730,000 children with the dengue vaccine that has been suspended following an announcement by French drug company Sanofi that it could worsen the disease in some cases.

While Sanofi's Dengvaxia is the first approved vaccine for dengue, scientists already recognised it did not protect equally against the four different types of the virus.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said it hoped by the end of the year to conduct a full review of data on the vaccine. In the meantime, the WHO recommended it be used only in people who had a prior infection with dengue.

A new analysis from six years of clinical data showed Dengvaxia provides persistent protective benefit in those who had prior infection. But for those not previously infected, more cases of severe disease could occur following vaccination.

According to Sanofi in Manila, 19 licences were granted for Dengvaxia, and it was launched in 11 countries, two of which – the Philippines and Brazil – had public vaccination programmes.

Singapore's Health Sciences Authority said it had flagged risks when Dengvaxia was approved there in October 2016, and was working with Sanofi to strengthen warnings on the drug's packaging.