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UK NEWS

GIRL, 14, DIES AFTER TAKING CERVICAL CANCER VACCINE



The vaccine, Cervarix, has already given other girls adverse side effects

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Tuesday September 29, 2009

By Natalie Fahy and Sara Dixon

A SCHOOLGIRL aged 14 died yesterday hours after being given the new cervical cancer jab.

Three of her classmates at the Blue Coat CofE School in Coventry suffered side-effects after being given the vaccination.

The death comes after months of concern over the vaccine, with thousands of girls suffering adverse reactions since nationwide immunisation began in September.

The girl, who has not yet been named, was given an injection of Cervarix at 10.45am yesterday and was later taken ill. She died at the town's University Hospital at lunchtime. The batch of vaccine used has since been withdrawn.

Cervarix protects against the human papilloma virus, a sexually-transmitted infection that causes up to 70 per cent of cervical cancer cases.

It is believed to be the first fatality linked to the vaccination programme. A report from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) published four days ago found that of 1.4 million doses of Cervarix given in the UK there were 4,600 adverse reactions. They include one case of anaphylactic shock and unconsciousness.

Dr Caron Grainger, joint director for public health for NHS Coventry, said: "No link can be made between the death and the vaccine until all the facts are known.

"NHS Coventry has taken the proactive step to quarantine the batch of vaccine being used as a precautionary measure only. We are conducting an urgent and full investigation into this tragedy."

A number of girls at the school reported "dizziness and nausea", but they had not required hospitalisation or medical treatment.

Britain is so far the only country in the world to be using Cervarix, made by GlaxoSmithKline, for a nationwide vaccination programme.

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In America, Cervarix was refused a licence in 2007 while further investigations were carried out into possible side-effects. A report released by the drug safety watchdog, the MHRA, last month showed that, of the 700,000 schoolgirls vaccinated last year, more than 1,300 of them had officially reported an adverse reaction.

They ranged from minor complaints to more serious ones such as convulsions.


Last night, Jackie Fletcher of Jabs, a campaign group for safe vaccinations, called for immediate withdrawal of all the HPV jabs. She said: "These dangerous side-effects must be investigated straight away. Recalling the jabs is not scare-mongering."

Some parents are so anxious about the possible side-effects of the drug, they have chosen to "opt-out" of the vaccination programme.

Dr Pim Kon, medical director at GlaxoSmithKline UK, said: "We are working with the Department of Health and MHRA to better understand this case as at this stage the exact cause of this tragic death is unknown."

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