

# China Nabs Fake Drug Ring

Manufacturing.net

SHANGHAI (AP) -- Police in central China's Henan province arrested 114 people in a crackdown on a counterfeit drugs ring, seizing \$30 million worth of fake medications and more than 65 million medicine bottles.

The reports Tuesday came as a top U.S. Food and Drug Administration official, Dara Corrigan, was visiting Shanghai to discuss the importance of safe drugs and China's role as a major supplier to the U.S. market.

China's increasing importance as a pharmaceuticals producer has ratcheted up concern over a slew of scandals over fake, adulterated and otherwise unsafe drugs -- especially given the thriving market in mail order medications.

With more than 80 percent of the active pharmaceutical ingredients used in the U.S. coming from overseas, and 40 percent of all finished medicines -- collaboration on safety is critical, said Corrigan, who oversees the FDA's inspections.

"It does demand we think about drug safety differently," she said.

The risks were driven home in 2008, when hundreds of people in the U.S. reported severe allergic reactions to heparin, a medicine to prevent blood clots, exported from China.

Those problems were eventually traced to contaminants in drug ingredients imported from a factory in a city west of Shanghai. After that -- and other scandals -- the FDA set up offices in China and increased inspections from only a few in 2007 to more than 80 last year.

"Nobody wants heparin to happen again," said Corrigan. But she said she believes the risks from that particular drug have been fully addressed. "We do believe the heparin supply is safe."

One major area of concern is mail order drugs and online pharmacies.

The FDA has met with representatives of shipping companies in hopes of coming up with new strategies to help reduce risks from such purchases.

"It's not just drugs but dietary products that can have all sorts of things in them," she said. "Limiting risk in that area is a big challenge."

The FDA's country director in China, Christopher Hickey, praised China's efforts to improve its own food and drug safety enforcement, saying he's "seen real progress."

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Published on Chem.Info (<http://www.chem.info>)

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China is battling problems with online sales of fake drugs itself, sometimes via fraudulent websites that use names of reputable pharmaceutical companies but of course not their products.

The authorities have announced several major crackdowns this year in various areas, including Henan, a relatively poor province. The action reported Tuesday, in the Henan city of Kaifeng, involved raids of 117 fake drug production and sales locations, state media reported.

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