

Novartis probes corruption claims in Chinese press

September 18 2013

Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis announced Tuesday it has opened an internal inquiry following Chinese press accusations of corruption at its Alcon eye care division.

"Alcon does not tolerate activities that are not in compliance with the laws and regulations in the markets where we operate," Novartis said in a statement.

"When any inappropriate activities are identified, we take swift remedial action," it added.

The Chinese daily 21st Century Business Herald reported that Alcon offered bribes to doctors at more than 200 hospitals in China via an intermediary.

The paper, citing a whistleblower it called "Zorro", said Alcon offered the doctors "research funding" for completing market surveys that never took place.

Novartis said it would take swift corrective measures if any inappropriate behaviour is identified.

China is mounting a sweeping probe into foreign pharmaceutical firms, accusing some of abusing their monopoly positions to boost prices unfairly.

German [pharmaceutical giant](#) Bayer confirmed Friday that Chinese authorities had visited one of its offices last month in connection with a potential case of "unfair competition".

Chinese police are also investigating Britain's GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) over allegations that employees gave bribes to sell its products.

Authorities have detained at least four GSK executives in the case, while state media have alleged the firm was responsible and not just individual employees.

French [baby formula](#) manufacturer Dumex promised on Monday to investigate allegations that its staff bribed Chinese hospital officials to provide its products to newborns.

In August, Beijing city health and corruption officials launched an investigation into allegations that staff at French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi bribed more than 500 Chinese doctors a total of about \$280,000, according to state media.

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