

Chinese parents stage rare public protest over vaccine scare

July 30 2018

About a dozen people held a rare protest outside China's Health Ministry to demand action over a vaccine scandal that has inflamed public fears over the safety of domestically produced drugs.

Video clips of the daring demonstration in front of the ministry were widely circulated on Twitter and other social media on Monday, showing the protesters holding banners urging accountability and justice in the latest case.

"Legislation for vaccines is imperative! Handle this properly and responsibly!" they shouted in the footage.

Social media posts said the demonstration took place on Monday but AFP was unable to independently confirm that.

The fate of the protesters, whose banners described them as parents, was not known. An AFP journalist who arrived later at the location found no one there.

Chinese security personnel typically react quickly to shut down public expressions of dissent, often detaining those involved.

China's latest product-safety scare emerged more than a week ago with news that major pharmaceutical manufacturer Changchun Changsheng Biotechnology had fabricated records and was ordered to cease production of rabies vaccines.

The government has said the suspect vaccine did not enter the market, but the case has provoked unusually strong outrage from Chinese consumers fed up with recurring safety scandals.

The protester's banners bore headlines saying "Vaccines?" and messages including "Please give the victims justice".

As information about the vaccine [scandal](#) emerged over the past two weeks, parents vented anger online, prompting the ruling Communist Party's internet censors to swoop in and purge mention of the issue.

The anger was exacerbated by the additional revelation that Changsheng's [vaccine](#) for diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT) had also failed to meet quality standards, but that 250,000 doses were nonetheless sold last year.

The depth of public outrage appeared to have caught authorities off-guard, and national leaders have vowed a thorough safety clean-up of the pharmaceutical sector.

Police in the northeastern city of Changchun, where Changsheng is based, have said 15 people, including the company chairwoman, had been detained for unspecified crimes.

China is regularly hit by scandals involving unsafe food, drugs or other products despite repeated official promises to root out the corruption and shoddy manufacturing that is usually blamed.

Vaccines in particular have been hit by repeated scares, touching an extremely sensitive public sore point due to the potential impact on children.

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