

Recall of two mercury-tainted proprietary Chinese medicines (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (August 27) endorsed a licensed manufacturer of proprietary Chinese medicines (pCms), Wing Ming Company (O/B Allways Health-care Corporation Limited), to voluntarily recall [Yuxiang] Pai Feng Pill (registration number: HKP-11670, batch number: 81515) and [Tung Yuen Tong] Pai Feng Pill (registration number: HKP-12768, batch number: 91606) from consumers as their samples have been found to contain excessive mercury.

The action was taken after samples of the above pCms obtained through the DH's market surveillance. Samples of [Yuxiang] Pai Feng Pill and [Tung Yuen Tong] Pai Feng Pill were found by the Government Laboratory to contain about 9.2 times and 1.3 times the permitted limit of mercury under the registration criteria of pCms respectively.

Initial investigation by the DH revealed that the above pCms were manufactured by Wing Ming Company for sale in the local market. According to their labels, the pCms are indicated for activating blood, tonifying qi and dysmenorrhoea.

"Acute mercury poisoning can cause inflammation of the mouth while prolonged exposure to mercury can damage the neurological system and kidneys. The DH has not received any report of related adverse events so far," a DH spokesman said.

Wing Ming Company has set up a hotline (2688 5491) for related enquiries. The DH will closely monitor the recall. The DH's investigation is ongoing.

According to sections 52 and 54 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), those who sell any drug not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the purchaser and sell a drug intended for use by man but unfit for that purpose are liable to a maximum penalty of a fine of \$10,000 and three months' imprisonment, and a fine of \$50,000 and six months' imprisonment respectively. Upon completion of the investigation, the DH will work with the Department of Justice on prosecution matters. The DH will also refer this case to the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong for possible disciplinary action.

Members of the public who have purchased the above two batches of pCms should stop using them immediately. Those who have used the above pCms and feel unwell should seek advice from healthcare professionals. People who have the above pCms should submit them to the DH's Chinese Medicine Division on 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal.

