

《WHO says list of free vaccines should be expanded》

The World Health Organization recommended on Tuesday that China include five additional vaccines in the country's most regulated vaccine program.

The recommendation came as the WHO said it is confident in the quality of vaccines made in China, following a scandal involving substandard ones worth 570 million yuan (\$88 million).

The five vaccines are important to all children, Lance Rodewald, team leader of the Expanded Program on Immunization, WHO China, said at a news conference.

Including them as Category 1 vaccines, which are provided for free by the government, can help improve oversight of these vaccines to better protect the health of children in China, Rodewald said.

The five vaccines, which include pneumococcal conjugate, rotavirus and inactivated polio vaccine, are recommended by the WHO for all countries for mandatory use, he said.

"Children ... won't need expensive treatment if they have been protected by the vaccines," he said.

In China, vaccines fall under two categories.

The five vaccines are currently included under Category 2 — those that are optional for children and bought privately. Category 1 vaccines are those in the government's Expanded Program on Immunization. It is mandatory for children in China to be vaccinated.

There are 11 such vaccines in Category 1 for children, including those for hepatitis B, polio and measles.

"China's health commission is quite interested in the addition of new vaccines," Rode-wald said.

The government also looks to use domestically made vaccines rather than relying on imported products, so the ability of Chinese manufacturers to supply vaccines is also an important factor, he said.

On Tuesday, the National Health and Family Planning Commission did not comment on the WHO suggestion.

Wang Huaqing, a physician at the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, said at a news conference last week that categorizing vaccines in China is based on how essential they are and the cost.

"Huge financial support is needed if all vaccines used in China are included in Category 1," he said.

The vaccine scandal, first reported in February, shocked the nation and stirred heated debate over the regulation and management of Category 2 vaccines.

A mother and daughter, who have been arrested in Shandong province, are alleged to have illegally sold improperly stored or expired vaccines in more than 20 provinces since 2011.

Shan Juan contributed to this story.

