

GSK hit by more bribery allegations in China

08 July 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau



Singapore: Days after a probe was initiated by the Chinese police into alleged 'economic crimes' committed by senior officials of GlaxoSmithKline in China, a latest news report has now released some controversial internal emails.

According to the *Wall Street Journal* report published on Sunday, China based staff of GSK allegedly handed doctors with cash and other rewards for prescribing Botox. Internal documents and emails showed GSK's China sales staff who were apparently instructed to use their personal email addresses to discuss marketing strategies related to Botox.

The emails showed how the sales staff discussed rewarding doctors for prescribing Botox with cash payments, credits that could be used to meet medical-education requirements and other rewards. The marketing strategy titled 'Vasily' (name borrowed from Vasily Zaytsev, a noted Russian sniper during World War II) targeted 48 doctors and planned to reward them with either a percentage of the cash value of the prescription or educational credits, based on the number of prescriptions made by the doctors. The news report that soon went viral claimed that the size of the planned payments to doctors ranged between \$245 and \$490. Botox sales staff also reportedly discussed making small cash payments to doctors, between \$65 and \$160, for transportation and dining costs at conferences and completing reports about prescriptions.

GSK however is said to have reportedly probed the Vasily program and found that the program was never implemented.

A whistleblower had earlier alleged that GSK's China sales staff bribed doctors to prescribe Botox over the past year, citing an internal email dated May 13. The same anonymous whistleblower had further alleged that GSK sales representatives in China were involved in widespread bribery to get doctors to prescribe the company's medicines, the report added.

The news report further quoted a company spokesman as saying, "We believe they come from the same source who has made previous claims of alleged corruption and bribery in our China business. After a thorough investigation, we found no evidence to support these allegations. Nevertheless, we are investigating these new claims. However, our inquiries to date have found no evidence of bribery or corruption in relation to our sales and marketing of therapeutic Botox in China."

These new allegations are being leveled out against the company's staff amid probe by Changsha police into alleged economic crimes.