

China targets Sanofi's operations, probe begins

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Singapore: Beijing municipal authorities have begun investigations into the bribery allegations made against French drug major Sanofi and its operations in China. A whistleblower had last week alleged that the company paid bribes to Chinese doctors to increase sales of two of its hypertension drugs, the country's news agency, *Xinhua* reported.

The report cited that the whistleblower alleged that Sanofi staff paid bribes, disguised as research grants, totaling about \$274,048 to 503 doctors at 79 hospitals in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hangzhou in late 2007 as 'research grants.'

The Beijing municipal health bureau said that it would be coordinating with the disciplinary authorities to investigate the case.

Meanwhile, Sanofi has stated that it takes the allegations seriously and that it is 'committed to cooperating with the authorities in any review they undertake regarding these allegations.'

Chinese authorities are said to be focusing on whether the payments made by Sanofi related to actual research, with associated patient names and medical reports.

The report further stated that the National Health and Family Planning Commission is aiming at stepping up its efforts to curb commercial bribery in the pharmaceutical industry and health service sector. The Commission has clarified that it plans to blacklist pharmaceutical companies and individuals involved in bribery.