

China-made Ebola drug sent to Africa

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JK-5, an experimental drug to treat the raging Ebola virus in Africa, made by Chinese company Sihuan Pharmaceutical Holding Company Limited, which has not been tested so far on humans has been sent in large quantities to treat Chinese nationals in Africa who may contract the disease.

The drug, developed by China's Academy of Military Medical Sciences, has been approved by the country's regulators only for emergency use. The drug is produced by Sihuan, a 13-year company promoted and run by medical professionals who had worked for the Chinese military hospitals earlier.

It is similar to Fuji Film-made Favipiravir, an influenza drug which has been found to be effective in treating Ebola symptoms. Sihuan's chief operating officer, Ms Jia Zhongxin, told Reuters on October 16 that few thousand doses of the drug JK-05 has been sent to Africa for use among aid workers.

Like their Japanese counterpart, Sihuan is also hoping to use the current conditions to do clinical trials on Ebola patients with emergency permissions from west African countries where the raging epidemic has killed more than 4000 people and infected over 10,000 people in the last few months. China has sent hundreds of health workers to the Ebola-hit region to help with the treatment.

Sihuan, co-founded by Dr Che Fengsheng, who is its chairman and CEO, is a respected neurosurgeon who has served in various Chinese military hospitals before becoming an entrepreneur. The company was listed for sometime in Singapore. It listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange in 2010. The company among the top 3 generic drug makers in China and specialized mainly in cardiovascular drugs. The military connection helped it to get access to the Ebola experimental drug.

"Right now we are formulating a plan for clinical trials, and don't rule out the possibility of using African patients," Sihuan's COO Ms Jia told Reuters. Ebola has so far reached Europe and USA. If it reaches the Asian region, the two experimental drugs from China and Japan could come in handy. The region's other pharma powerhouse, India, has not done much on

developing any treatment against Ebola so far.