

<http://haaretz.com/hasen/spages/777902.html>

Last update - 18:38 22/10/2006

## **Four people die after receiving flu vaccinations in 2 separate clinics**

By Ron Reznik, Haaretz Correspondent and Haaretz Service

Four people have died after receiving flu vaccinations, it was announced Sunday. The Leumi health maintenance organization informed the Health Ministry of three victims among its subscribers, and the Meuhedet HMO announced that one of its subscribers had also died.

In response, the Health Ministry has instructed health facilities to immediately stop providing the vaccinations.

Army Radio reported that the first three victims were all vaccinated last week at the same branch in Kiryat Gat. The injections were all performed from the same vaccine pool.

Three of the victims, ages 75, 70 and 52, had been vaccinated in previous years against the flu, and none showed abnormal reactions.

An initial investigation conducted by the Health Ministry discovered that all four had suffered from various illnesses, including diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems.

The first three people died of cardiac arrest - one of them a day after receiving the vaccination, another three days after and the last six days after. The fourth victim, a 67-year-old male from Petah Tikva, died several hours after receiving the immunization.

Ashkelon District physicians are investigating the deaths. The Health Ministry has contacted the manufacturer of the vaccine, Aventis Pasteur of France, whose products are sold worldwide, and requested that it perform extensive examinations of its laboratories.

It is still unclear whether there is a connection between the vaccinations and the fatalities, or the nature of such a connection if it exists.

It is also unclear whether there were complications in the administration of the vaccine, whether related to the method of injection or the vaccine itself.

The meltdown

'How sad,' I hear my wife whispering next to the cage. 'He's depressed, that lion.'

1. Flu vaccinations 16:52 | Ilan 22/10/06
2. Of course Ilan #1 18:09 | S 22/10/06

## **Deaths linked to flu vaccine**

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3318095,00.html>

**Health Ministry orders clinics to halt flu vaccinations after three citizens die three days after receiving flu vaccine at HMO. Health minister says no link found between vaccinations, deaths; later, another death following flu vaccine reported in different clinic**

Meital Yasur-Beit Or

Latest Update: 10.22.06, 18:05

The Health Ministry ordered a halt of all flu vaccinations across the country after three people died on Sunday, days after being injected with the same flu vaccine.

The Ministry said an investigation has been launched.

The victims, aged 52, 70, and 72, were vaccinated at a Kiryat Gat health maintenance organization, where they have been receiving the same vaccine for three years. They also suffered unnamed health problems.

A number of doctors in the Ashkelon area were contacted over the incident and the vaccine's manufacturer has been notified, the Health Ministry said.

Dr. Michael Gdolvich of the Health Ministry arrived at the Kiryat Gat clinic to investigate the deaths.

### **Health Minister: No link between vaccine, death**

Flu vaccines world wide are produced by two major manufacturers Novartis and Chiron. The Health Ministry tests all imported vaccines before being approved for sale in Israel.

Health Minister Yacov Ben Yizri said Sunday evening that "more than 140,000 have been injected with a flu vaccination in the State of Israel, and the only place where this incident happened, in which three people died, a very rare incident, was in one HMO."

The minister explained that his office had launched an inquiry into the matter "and at the moment we are talking about three people who suffered from diseases. So far no connection has been found between this disaster and the flu vaccinations."

Ben Yizri clarified, however, that until the issue is "completely clarified" with the vaccination manufacturers, the flu vaccinations will not be resumed.

Later, during a press conference, Health Ministry Director-General Yitzhak Berlovitch reported of a fourth incident in which a patient died after being injected with a flu vaccination.

### **The influenza epidemic**

Every year millions of people get infected with the disease; however, less than one percent of them, on average, die from it. The disease is most devastating on babies, the elderly, pregnant women and chronic patients, as well as those with a weakened immune system such as people who have cancer or suffer from malnutrition.

Since the flue is a viral disease, there is no reliable treatment for the disease. The only recommended treatment is the use of drugs to alleviate the symptoms of the disease such as pain and fever medication, anti cough medicine, combined with rest and increased hydration.

In extreme cases, the disease can be treated with an anti-viral medication, but those are seldom used because of their side affects they cause, their questionable effectiveness, and their high price. However, the efforts to develop a cure for the flue are ongoing, and over the past few years there has been some progress in that field.

An influenza expert told Ynet that there is no debate about deaths caused by the flue vaccine. There is also a report from 1976 of a group of patients which suffered from partial paralysis due to the vaccine.

Last update - 16:39 23/10/2006

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/778269.html>

### **French inoculation firm sends experts to Israel after deaths**

By Ron Reznik, Haaretz Correspondent and Haaretz Service

Sanofi-Aventis sends team to Israel to study deaths of four people who received flu shots.

Flu shots, suspended Sunday after four people died this week and last week shortly after receiving the inoculations, may resume on Monday,

Health Minister Yacov Ben-Yizri said.

But as uncertainties were not dispelled by noon, the French manufacturer of the vaccine, Sanofi-Aventis, said that it was sending experts to Israel to study the deaths of the men who had recently received flu shots.

By mid-morning on Monday there were signs that ministry officials might take longer than expected to order a resumption of vaccinations. They had first said that the order might come as early as 10 A.M. on Monday, but later indicated that they were waiting for additional information, including the results of an autopsy performed on the last person to have died following a vaccination.

Results of the last autopsy performed on a fatality suspected to be linked to the inoculation, revealed the man had died of an unrelated heart illness, Army Radio reported Monday.

The 67-year-old Petah Tikva resident died of a heart condition from which he had suffered for a long time, the radio said.

The Health Ministry, however, did not release a new statement after these results were announced.

The man was insured at the Meuhedet HMO in Petah Tikva and suffered from serious heart disease. He was given the shot on Thursday by his wife, a dentist. A few hours later he was found dead on a city street.

Sanofi-Aventis said its team in Israel would try to find out more about the people who died. The four people, who were elderly and suffered from chronic illnesses, had received flu shots up to six days before their deaths, company spokesman Alain Bernal said.

Bernal said the vaccine had passed numerous safety checks, both in France and Israel, and that 140,000 people had received the shot in Israel alone.

"We are taking this seriously, we are studying it seriously, but we have total confidence in the quality of our product," Bernal said. "This is a vaccine that saves thousands of lives every year."

Professor Manfred Green, head of the Health Ministry's center for disease control, said Monday that his office had concluded that there

was no connection between the four deaths, and that a final determination would be made after information was received from the French manufacturer of the vaccine.

A later Army Radio report said, however, that there was a slight chance of a connection.

Green told the radio early Monday that he would have no problem being vaccinated himself with the flu vaccine, even if it came from the same batch as the four who died on Sunday.

Three of the four died after the shots were vaccinated at the Leumit Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) in Kiryat Gat. All three suffered from several chronic ailments, including heart disease and diabetes.

The four persons who died are Shimon Amar, 76, from Kiryat Gat; Yitzhak Azoulay, 68, Kiryat Gat; Nadav Yerushalmi, 53, Moshav Shekef; and Ziggo Kalenstein, 67, of Petah Tikva. The Health Ministry said Sunday that all four were inoculated with vaccine from the same series and purchased from the same manufacturer, the French pharmaceutical firm Sanofi-Aventis, which markets the vaccine all over the world.

Ben-Yizri said Sunday the ministry had asked Sanofi-Aventis whether unexplained fatalities had been reported in any other country.

The shots were being given last week only to patients at high risk from heart, lung or respiratory disease, high blood pressure, cancer or AIDS.

The decision to call a halt to the inoculations was made by Ben-Yizri and ministry heads Sunday afternoon, after the Kiryat Gat HMO reported the three deaths.

Two of the three were inoculated last Sunday. One died a day later, and the second over the weekend. The third person was inoculated on Monday and died three days later.

The report of the fourth death came while Ben-Yizri was giving a press conference, a few minutes after he told reporters "no connection has been found between the tragedy and the flu inoculations."

The three men from Kiryat Gat who died had all been inoculated in previous years.

The Health Ministry has started an investigation into possible sources of

contamination but so far none has been found in the vaccine; some 140,000 people were inoculated over the last week. The Health Ministry also investigated the medical team at the Kiryat Gat clinic. THE shots were administered to all three Kiryat Gat recipients by the same nurse.

The Health Ministry said it would open a hot-line jointly with the HMOs Monday, from noon until 2 P.M., to calm the public by answering questions about inoculations.

The vaccines were supplied to the clinic after the Health Ministry conducted its usual standards and quality tests.

The ministry said anyone who received a flu shot and felt unwell should see his or her family doctor.

A total of 1.2 million vaccine doses were purchased ahead of this year's winter flu season, to combat the five strains of flu against which the World Health Organization and the Health Ministry recommends inoculation: A, B, Caledonian, Wisconsin and Malaysian. Only about a 10th of all inoculations needed by the public are available at present because of delays in growing the virus cultures by the two major vaccine manufacturers in the U.S. and France. The Health Ministry therefore recommends the shots first be given to those whose chronic diseases put them at high risk of complications from the flu, first and foremost the elderly and the chronically ill.