

# GSK lab fined over vaccine tests that killed 14 babies

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[http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/88922/gsk-lab-fined-\\$1m-over-tests-that-killed-14--babies](http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/88922/gsk-lab-fined-$1m-over-tests-that-killed-14--babies)

## **GlaxoSmithKline CEO Andrew Witty.**

GlaxoSmithKline Argentina Laboratories company was fined 400,000 pesos by Judge Marcelo Aginsky following a report issued by the National Administration of Medicine, Food and Technology (ANMAT in Spanish) for the killing of 14 babies during illegal lab vaccine trials conducted between 2007 and 2008.

Likewise, two doctors -Héctor Abate, and Miguel Tregnaghi- were fined with 300,000 pesos each for irregularities during the studies.

The charges included experimenting with human beings, falsifying parental authorizations so babies could participate in vaccine-trials conducted by the laboratory from 2007 to 2008.

Since 2007, 15,000 children under the age of one from Mendoza, San Juan and Santiago del Estero have been included in the research protocol, a statement of what the study is trying to achieve. Babies were recruited from poor families that attended to public hospitals.

A total of 7 babies died in Santiago del Estero; 5 in Mendoza; and 2 in San Juan.

Pediatrician Ana Marchese, who reported the case through the Argentine Federation of Health Professionals (FESPROSA in Spanish), and was working at the Eva Perón children's public hospital in Santiago del Estero when the studies were being conducted, said this morning in conversations with Continental AM radio that "GSK Argentina set an protocol at the hospital, and recruited several doctors working there."

"These doctors took advantage of many illiterate parents whom take their children for treatment by pressuring and forcing them into signing these 28-page consent forms and getting them involved in the trials."

“Laboratories can't experiment in Europe or the United States, so they come to do it in third-world countries.”

Colombian and Panama were also chosen by GSK as staging grounds for trials of the vaccine against the pneumococcal bacteria.

Likewise, Marchese, explained the *modus operandi*: “Once a picked patient arrived, it would automatically disappear to be taken somewhere else in order to be treated by those doctors specially recruited by GSK. These kind of practices are not legal and occurred without any type of state control, plus they don't comply with minimum ethical requirements.”

Marchese also remembered that “laboratory trials on human beings are not legalized in Argentina.”

Furthermore, the pediatrician explained that “it is also known that in various particular cases, the doctors who had conducted the trials did not answer the calls made by the worried parents after witnessing their babies' reactions to the vaccines.”

According to Marchese, “there already exist very good vaccines for the same diseases, but we all know how laboratories work, they only care for their own business.”

To end, Doctor Marchese aimed to Santiago del Estero Governor, Gerardo Zamora, who “never ever came out to stage to comment on the case, and same happened with national deputies and senators that didn't even bother into discussing a hot topic that was echoed worldwide. I'm also ashamed of the scientific community that also kept its mouth shut.”

Julieta Ovejero, great aunt of one of the six babies who died in Santiago del Estero, said that “A lot of people wanted to leave the protocol but they weren't allowed; they forced them to continue under the threat that if they leave they won't receive any other vaccine.”

During 2008, the vaccine trial was still ongoing despite the reports issued by FESPROSA, and those in charge of the study told reporters that the procedures were being carried out in a lawful manner.

On the contrary, the ruling states that the laboratory as well the involved doctors broke all legal requirements for conducting clinical tests on babies.

Surprisingly, during same year pediatrician Enrique Smith, one of the lead investigators told reporters: “Only 12 have died throughout the country, which is a

very low figure if we compare it with the deaths produced by respiratory illnesses caused by the pneumococcal bacteria.”

In Santiago del Estero, one of the country's poorest provinces, the trials were authorized when Enrique's brother, Juan Carlos Smith, was provincial health minister.

According to Fesprosa, “the laboratory paid \$8,000 pesos for each child included in the study, but none (of that money) remained in the province that lends the public facilities and the health personnel for the private research.”

GlaxoSmithKline is a global pharmaceutical, biologics, vaccines and consumer healthcare company headquartered in London, United Kingdom. It is the world's third-largest pharmaceutical company measured by revenues after Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer.

Ironically, if one visits GlaxoSmithKline Argentina web site it welcomes the reader with a company disclosure that says: “We have a challenging and inspiring mission to improve the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer.”

According to [www.GSK.com](http://www.GSK.com) site, Glaxo was originally a baby food manufacturer processing local milk into a baby food by the same name, and founded in Bunnythorpe, New Zealand in 1904. The product was sold in the 1930s under the slogan "Glaxo builds bonny babies".

GlaxoSmithKline Argentina manufacturing 28,333 m<sup>2</sup> centre is located in Northern Greater Buenos Aires town of San Fernando.