

### China issues new rules to curb corruption in government drug purchases

The Chinese government on Thursday released a set of rules to control drug prices and prevent commercial bribery during government drug purchasing.

According to the new rules on the management and supervision of centralized drug procurements, medical institutions and pharmaceutical companies must now purchase drugs using a "centralized procurement system," which is supervised by provincial-level governments.

The system, aiming to uniform drug buying procedures and control drug prices, first began in 1999 and had been adopted in most regions of the country by the end of 2009, according to the Ministry of Health.

Using this system, hospitals should report to the provincial-level government the type, quantity and other requirements of medicines they want to purchase, and then the government will invite bids from pharmaceutical companies and sellers, select the most suitable bid and handle the purchasing on behalf of the hospitals.

However, in recent years some drug makers and sellers bribed government officials and hospital staff in order to have their products listed in the purchase. In other instances, the price of drugs were raised once they were listed for being purchased.

According to the regulations, pharmaceutical companies and drug sellers must not raise the prices of their products listed in the buying program prior to the purchase being made.

The rules specify that drug manufacturers and sellers must not bribe government officials and hospital staff or provide false information on their products during the bidding process.

Those violating these regulations will be punished, and their cases might be transferred to judicial agencies if the violations are deemed serious, according to the new rules.

The new regulations were jointly released by the Ministry of Health, the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Supervision and several other government departments.

*Source: Xinhua*

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