

Cervical cancer drug Gardasil linked to deaths

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Fears have been raised over the safety of a cervical cancer vaccine which health officials plan to give all 12-year-old girls, after it was revealed that the drug has been linked to several deaths.

Three young women are reported to have died days after the drug Gardasil was administered, while the jab is also suspected of triggering "adverse reactions" in 1,700 patients. The figures were uncovered by campaigners who made a freedom of information request in the US, where the vaccine was approved for use a year ago.

Tom Fitton, the president of Judicial Watch, which extracted the data, said: "Reports on the vaccine read like a catalogue of horrors."

The women – aged 12, 19 and 22 – suffered heart attacks or blood clots after being injected with Gardasil, which protects against the sexually transmitted human papilloma virus which causes most cases of cervical cancer. Hundreds of others reported suffering what could be adverse reactions, including paralysis, seizures and miscarriages.

The news comes just days after the announcement that the drug would be added to the childhood immunisation programme.

However, it has not been conclusively proven that Gardasil had directly caused any of the deaths or reported health problems.

Nicholas Kitchin, from Gardasil, manufacturers Sanofi Pasteur MSD, said the fact that symptoms were reported after a vaccination did not necessarily mean they were caused by the vaccine.

A spokesman for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency said no "proven, serious new risks have been identified", but added the effects would be monitored when Gardasil is used in the UK.

Jackie Fletcher, from the vaccine damage support group Jabs, said: "Trials of this jab have mostly been on adults, so we don't have any idea of the long-term effect on children."

Dr John Oakley, a West Midlands GP, said the trials for Gardasil had been so limited that the children taking it would be like "guinea pigs".

Many health campaigners have welcomed the plan to vaccinate British girls, although there have been claims it will encourage teenagers to have sex early