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US Approves First Vaccine for Hepatitis A

by Gina Pugliese, RN, MS
Medical News Editor

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) gave SmithKline Beecham PLC approval to distribute Havrix, the first vaccine licensed for preventing hepatitis A The US was the 41st country to license Havrix. An FDA spokesperson said the agency wanted to be sure that the vaccine caused no significant adverse effects in recipients. An estimated 1.3 million people in Europe and Asia have received Havrix since 1991.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that hepatitis A cases are underreported considerably. About 23,000 cases are officially reported each year, but CDC estimates that the virus infects 150,000 Americans each year.

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