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`Life or death' Ministry warning
HOSPITAL DRUG ALERT AS 5 DIE
Race to find 500 drip-feed bottles

DAILY TELEGRAPH REPORTERS

"Life or death" hunt for 500 bottles of dextrose drip-feed solution was ordered last night by the Department of Health as emergency inquiries began into the recent deaths of five patients at Devonport hospital, Plymouth.

Dr Denis Cahal, senior principal medical officer at the Department of Health, said on television last night that the distribution of the solution was "just a human error—one of those accidents which sometimes occur."

Dr Cahal said that it would be about two days before all the bottles of batch D 1102/C were located. Most of them were believed to be in south-west England.

Joint statement

The joint statement issued last night by the Department of Health and the dextrose manufacturer, Evans Medical, said:

The batch was also the sub-batch of 5 per cent. dextrose solution for intravenous feeding, manufactured by Evans Medical Ltd., of Speke, Liverpool, is suspected of being faulty.

The sub-batch number is D 1102/C and it was distributed in May, 1971.

The manufacturer has taken all possible steps to ensure that any bottles remaining from this sub-batch, which originally consisted of approximately 660 bottles, be accounted for.

So far 156 bottles have been accounted for and an unknown number may yet to be found.

The Department of Health and Social Security ask all hospital pharmacies, wholesale pharmacists, doctors and any other people who have any 5 per cent. dextrose solution for intravenous feeding from Evans of Speke, to check their stocks immediately and return any bottles which are suspected to the manufacturer.

The manufacturer does not use any of the preparations bearing this number in any circumstances.

Glaxo subsidiary

Evans Medical Ltd. was founded nearly 200 years ago and is now a Glaxo subsidiary.

It manufactures several hundred lines of standard drugs for hospitals and pharmacies in the United Kingdom. Few of its products can be bought over the counter.

A spokesman said last night that 5 per cent. dextrose solution was purely used for intravenous feeding and should not be bought at High Street chemists.

Guy's Hospital said last night that it had received the warning from the Department of Health and the tissue was not affected.

A spokesman at St. Thomas' said an immediate check was being made.

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