

Vaccine-related kids' deaths trebled

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CHENNAI: The number of children dying due to immunization-related complications has more than tripled after the government closed down three public sector vaccine labs in January 2008.

The government has no clue about the causes while children continue to die, the latest being that of five infants in Gujarat on Wednesday. Details given by the Union ministry of health and family welfare in reply to an RTI query filed by Dr K V Babu of Payyanur show that 111 children died in 2008 due to "adverse effect after immunization (AEFI)". The AEFI is a general term that covers various reasons, including bad vaccine quality due to break in cold chain, contamination and complications due to pre-existing conditions of the child.

In 2009, the latest year for which the ministry has given details, 116 children died due to AEFI. In contrast, 32 children lost their lives to AEFI in 2007. The government closed down its three labs — Central Research Institute in Kasauli, BCG Laboratory in Chennai and Pasteur Institute of India in Coonoor — in January 2008, citing the non-compliance of good manufacturing practices. To make up for the demand of 75 lakh vaccines doses of six kinds needed for its universal immunization programme, the government has been procuring them from a private firm.

The ministry has not found anything amiss.

"In a country where 25 million children are born every year, it won't be proper to jump into conclusions. We are following the protocol of investigations," health secretary K Chandramouli told TOI.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Vaccine-related-kids-deaths-trebled/articleshow/7749994.cms>

