

## How Do You Say FDA in Mandarin?

Posted by Jonathan D. Rockoff



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**HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt**

First there was tainted pet food, then came contaminated heparin and adulterated milk from China. The FDA just opened the outpost in Beijing to guard Americans from threats like these.

It's the agency's first overseas office and is part of the regulator's effort to better scrutinize the large and growing number of foods and drugs that China ships into the U.S. "The FDA is a global regulatory body and expanding their footprint outside the U.S. is the first step in becoming more active in the global market," Patrick Ronan, a former chief of staff at the FDA, tells the Health Blog.

The christening of the Beijing office will be followed soon by the opening of offices in Shanghai and Guangzhou. The agency wants to station inspectors in India, Central America and other countries, too.

Michael Doyle, director of the University of Georgia's Center for Food Safety, described today's news as largely symbolic. "There are too few FDA personnel with a small budget and very limited opportunities for oversight to address an enormous Chinese food industry that lacks adequate food safety controls," Doyle tells the Health Blog. "The major contributor to ensuring safe foods from China are U.S. food importers and processors that market Chinese food ingredients and products in the U.S."

Still, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt said the event represented the start of a "new era" allowing the FDA to work more closely with manufacturers and regulators abroad. Leavitt said the goal is to help Chinese industry and government develop quality practices and standards.

We weren't sure Leavitt would be welcomed after the FDA last week imposed a sweeping import detention on Chinese goods containing dairy products. This blog is eager for Leavitt to memorialize the trip on his blog. How could you miss the start of a new era in our favorite new medium, Mr. Secretary?