

# 毛霉菌「別嘌醇」必須查出根源

香港大學驗出降尿酸藥物「別嘌醇」毛霉菌含量超標一百倍後，引起社會廣泛關注。事件涉及藥物生產監管制度以及病人安全，性質是嚴重的。

過去三個月內，港島瑪麗醫院先後有五名癌症病人因消化系統感染毛霉菌死去，當時院方曾懷疑是食物或木筷子等食具受污染出事，結果經港大袁國勇教授實驗室化驗，查出毛霉菌竟存在於病人所服用的「別嘌醇」藥物內。藥物本應用於治病救人，如今卻成了「奪命殺手」，情況的確令人震驚。

從機制上看，食物及衛生局聯同香港大學在有病人因毛霉菌喪生後，認真展開各種可能性的追蹤和研究，從而能夠在較快時間內找出「元兇」，工作是有成效的；但另一方面，出現毛霉菌藥物的「歐化」藥廠，是本港最大的藥廠，且是政府公立醫院最主要的藥物供應商，被採用的藥物達四十多種，包括出事的降尿酸藥物以及用於治療傷風感冒、高血壓、胃病、血糖以至眼藥水等藥物，範圍十分廣泛，也就是說，「別嘌醇」事件已經令到全港公立醫院病人用藥問題蒙上陰影，加上私營醫院及私家醫生診所普遍也有採用「歐化」生產的藥物，影響就更廣泛了。

就有關事件，目前最關鍵是找出藥物出現毛霉菌的原因。全港公立醫院今起為四萬多名病人更換藥物，但就如診症一樣，換藥只能「治標」，只有找到「源頭」才能「治本」。

從常理看來，藥物出現毛霉菌，原因可能在於原材料、生產流程以及包裝、儲存等幾個環節，而不論是哪一個環節出事，問題都是嚴重的；按照有關條例，藥物生產有嚴格的規管與監控，包括廠房的空氣質素、含菌量以至溫度都有嚴格要求，每半小時便要進行一次測試、紀錄在案，而藥物由生產到製成包裝，其間最少要經過五次檢查測試，包括細菌培植，因此「歐化」的「別嘌醇」竟會出現毛霉菌超標一百倍，實是令人難以想像。

眼前最令病人、市民以及業界擔心的，是不知除了「別嘌醇」外，其他「歐化」生產的藥物有無受污染。據一些業界人士初步分析，毛霉菌有可能存在於製藥丸所必須的澱粉質原材料內，如果此一推測屬實，則情況可能會較現在已知的更嚴重。

在事件發生後，市民普遍質疑的一點是，出事的「歐化」藥廠，號稱全港最大，設備先進，而且在今年的一月和三月，衛生署都曾派人前往該



降尿酸藥物「別嘌醇」被驗出毛霉菌含量超標百倍，全港公立醫院為4萬多病人更換藥物

廠巡查，為何問題沒能被及早發現？

當前，就「別嘌醇」事件，以及由此引發的藥物安全問題，醫衛當局必須高度重視，要爭取在較短時間內找出毛霉菌存在的原因以及源頭所在，並且制訂防止再有類似事件發生的有效辦法。過去一些醫療事故，予市民的印象是「醫醫相衛」，出事原因最後總是語焉不詳或不了了之，不能令市民釋疑。本港醫療服務的質素和水平整體是令人滿意的，但隔不多久總會出一些「亂子」，看來關鍵仍在於要進一步加強監管和完善制度，才能令市民真正安心。

2009/03/09 大公報社評

## Editorial

# Causes for drug contamination must be found

A test by Hong Kong University found allopurinol, a drug for gout or hyperuricemia sufferers, to have 100 times the standard level of the mucorales fungi. The result has aroused wide concern in society. This is a very serious incident which exposes problems concerning the supervision system on drug production and patients' safety.

In past three months, five cancer patients at Queen Mary Hospital had died successfully after their digestion systems were infected with a fungus – mucormycosis. Hospital authority at first suspected that either the foodstuffs or wooden chopsticks were contaminated. But a laboratory test conducted by Professor Yuen Kwok Yung of Hong Kong University has found the fungi existed in the allopurinol tablets for the patients. The drug, which was supposed to cure patients, now turned out to be a "killer". This is really a very shocking finding.

In regard to the supervision system, the Food and Health Bureau and Hong Kong University have taken seriously the deaths of fungus-infected patients and conducted all possible follow-up tracings and studies, so that the "criminal culprit" could be identified in a relatively short period of time. They have worked effectively. On the other hand, however, Europharm, the producer of contaminated drug, is the largest drug manufacturer in Hong Kong and a major drug supplier to public hospitals. It supplies more than 40 drugs to public hospitals ranging from drugs for cold and flu, high blood pressure, stomach diseases, high blood sugar to eye drops, in addition to the contaminated drug for gout. This is meant the incident of tainted allopurinol has cast a shadow on the use of drugs at public hospitals. Moreover, drugs produced by Europharm are also widely used at private hospitals and clinics. Thus the impact of the incident may be even more far-reaching.

In regard to the incident, the **crux of the matter** right now is to find out what has caused the drug to be contaminated with the fungus. All public hospitals in Hong Kong today begin to replace the tainted drug. As in medical treatment, replacement of the drug can only "provide temporary relief", only when the "root cause (of a disease)" is found can a permanent cure be applied.

Common sense suggests that a drug could get contaminated with fungi from its raw materials, in its manufacturing process, packaging or storage. Wherever the problem occurs, it is a very serious matter. According to relevant regulations, pharmaceutical production is subject to strict monitoring and supervision. Among others, there are strict standards on the air quality, air germ content and temperature in a factory, which must be checked and recorded in every half an hour. And a drug, from its manufacturing to packaging, must pass at least five tests including germ culture. Consequently, it is really unimaginable that the allopurinol

produced by Europharm could ever have fungi 100 times the standard level.

What worries patients and citizens the most right now is whether other drugs than allopurinol produced by Europharm are also tainted. According to an initial analysis by industrial insiders, it is very likely that the fungi existed in starch, a raw material used to make tablets. If such conjecture is true, then the real situation would probably be much more serious than known to us.

After the occurrence of the incident, the general public have a common question: How come the problem could not be found in time, as the Department of Health had just sent inspectors in January and March to check the factory of Europharm, which boasts Hong Kong's largest pharmaceutical manufacturer with advanced equipment?

Now health and medical care authorities must take seriously the incident of tainted allopurinol and the incurred problem of drug safety, and devote their efforts to find out the causes and origin of the existence of the fungi and work out effective measures to prevent any similar incident from occurring again. Authorities' dealing with some medical accidents in the past has given the public the impression that they are partial to medical personnel and institutions. For, their investigations into these accidents either mentioned but vaguely the causes or simply left the problems unsettled, unable to clear up citizens' doubts. Generally speaking, the quality and level of our medical-care services is satisfactory. However, "troubles" occur persistently from time to time. **The heart of the matter** is to further strengthen supervision and improve the system, so that citizens can really feel completely at ease.

09 March 2009

### Idiom

The crux of the matter, the heart of the matter, the root of the matter/something – The essential issue of the matter.

Examples:

1. All right, this is the crux of the matter.
2. The crux of the matter is that he is incompetent and we will have to fire him.
3. It's about time that we get to the heart of the matter.
4. Now let's go to the heart of the matter. Who is going to pay for all this?
5. It will take a little more study to get to the root of the problem.

## 通識記憶體

香港接連爆出醫療問題，公立醫院早前相繼發現割鐘女病人乳房、醫院大門前見死不救、病人腸道感染毛霉菌死亡，醫院管理局、衛生署、食物及衛生局接二連三遭市民批評、指摘以至咒罵。

### 數千病人排隊換藥

日前又發生問題藥物事件。3月6日，歐化藥業被發現生產帶有毛霉菌的別嘌醇藥物，造成「食死人」事件震動全港，數以千計的病人須到公立醫院排隊換藥，單是3月8日就有4399名病人換藥。

受毛霉菌污染的「別嘌醇」藥物，全港有多達9萬名痛風症病人、230名血癌和淋巴瘤病人服用

，影響巨大。別嘌醇迄今已造成7名癌症及骨髓移植病人喪生，事件不可謂不大也。衛生署發現藥物含菌量超標100倍。

歐化藥業不是單一的問題藥物事件。2月26日，萬輝藥業安排回收全港藥房的傷風感冒藥、藥膏、咳水及鈣水等十多種藥物，原因是藥物標籤上的有效日期錯誤，較實際的日期長一至兩年，事件於3月10日才被公開。

萬輝藥業在3月12日公布，有216種藥物有效期出錯，並因在衛生署調查期間不合作及有隱瞞，偽造兩份藥物申請續牌註冊的文件，被衛生署勒令即時停牌1個月。



毛霉菌含量超標的「別嘌醇」

## 中文基本功

# 贛州的贛不能有邊讀邊

二月一日香港電台節目《中華五千年》講抗戰時期蔣經國在贛州，主持人每遇贛字，例必有邊讀邊，讀成貢獻的貢。殊不知如此讀法，大錯特錯！

一般字典或辭典，贛字有兩個音，一個讀貢，一個讀紺；但說明贛州（在江西）、贛榆（在江蘇）的贛字都要讀紺。記得港台「正音」人士每每強調：字音以字典為準。他鼓勵大家查字典。不知今次贛州的贛誤讀成貢，事前有無查過字典，或查了前半而放棄後半？

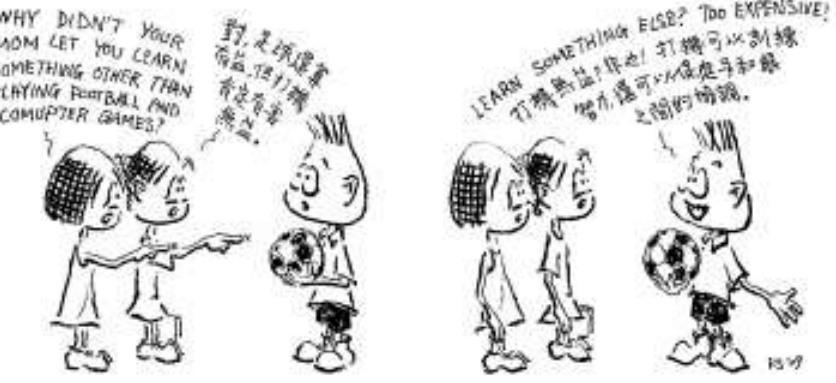
不管如何，贛州的贛，亦即贛水的贛、江西簡稱的贛，不能有邊讀邊，這是全國皆然，不僅粵語。有誰嫌紺字太深，不知怎麼讀，可以讀禁，因為粵語紺、禁同音。

贛字古老，有兩千多年。依《漢書》記載，贛字在漢代作為縣名，有

豫章郡（今江西省）的贛縣，有琅邪郡（轄今山東省東南部和江蘇省東北部）的贛榆縣。一千三百年前，唐代的顏師古為《漢書》注音，特別說明這兩個縣的贛字要讀紺。唐代已有贛州，仍轄贛縣，元代改州為路，明、清又改為府。民國初年，廢府存縣，抗戰時又設贛州。這贛字讀紺（禁）一直未改。

此字有邊讀邊誤讀成貢，可分三種情況：（一）自己不知讀法，人云亦云。如今看了上述資料，自該改正。「人誰無過，過而能改，善莫大焉」。（二）查字典只查了上半，就決定讀貢，如此懶人，我難碰到一例，畢竟不多，相信也會改正。（三）懷有某種目的，故意改變讀音，甚至美其名曰「正音」，不惜引起混亂。這不僅不重視中文，而且在「玩」中文。對這類人，必須嚴肅對待！ 容若

## 五星級英文



# 父母夢想難套子女身上

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的漫畫也畫得很好，但我太太希望他能專注一些嚴肅的學科，到美國讀大學。」

### 志趣喜好難勉強

相若的個案，在香港也見過。有個朋友說，兒子當初選擇了在美國的大學攻讀廣告學時，他的反應是廣告學也值得花時間去鑽研？而且坦承與兒子對話時，可能流露出對廣告的個人意見，於是父子關係也受了影響。

許多影響年輕人、陪他們成長的普及文化，在他們父母眼中都是不夠嚴肅的科目。這與代溝有關。記得小時候姐姐很喜歡音樂，是學校的合唱團成員，電台的流行曲也背得滾瓜爛熟，而且會把零用錢儲起來，去大會堂聽外國來的交響樂團表演。她出來工作後就學各種樂器。直至現在，我仍認為若父母當年不認為音樂不夠正經，今日姐姐會在這方面有一番作為。但年幼時，無論姐姐怎樣說，父母都沒有收到信息，不會欣賞女兒的天賦和興趣。姐姐現在積極為兒子提供學音樂的機會，但她的兒子卻喜歡打機。（與父母對話・二）

## 社經「數」描

# 航空業08年蝕400億

國泰航空周內公布2008年全年業績錄得虧損85.58億港元，其中最主要原因是國泰08年為抗衡油價高企的風險訂了燃油對沖合約，出現76億元的未變現市值虧損，而截至09年2月，已在未變現燃油對沖市值虧損19億元。

除了國泰航空虧損外，整個航空業亦因國際金融海嘯引發的全球經濟危機陷入嚴峻的境地。自08年9月開始，印度等亞太區重要市場，客運量下降了6.8%，航空公司縮減航班，停止招聘，甚至裁員、減薪，以應付客運量銳減。

國際航協指出，08年全球航空公司淨虧損達50億美元（折合約400億港元），而股價到年終亦平均下跌60%。

受全球信貸危機影響，不少歐美

地區商務旅客取消或推遲了前來中國或亞洲區商務考察，令各地航空公司削減航線，美其名曰優化航線，事實是減少營運虧損。

內地旅行社聯同各航空公司合力展開救市行動，藉以刺激消費者的旅遊意欲，以貫徹內銷救外貿的損失，但成效如何，尚未可料。在經濟前景不明朗的情況下，亦會在特定的時間累積旅遊消費力量，譬如春節、勞動節、國慶等日子；內地航空業雖有困境，但在重整航線和重組航空公司之下，會安然度過航空業的嚴冬。

至於以香港為基地的國泰航空，已公布了面對虧損的策略，譬如延遲新飛機付運、暫停貨運站工程以及要求機組人員放無薪假等。

專業教育培訓顧問 呂康