



Keeping Antibiotics Effective is Everyone's Responsibility!

Brussels 18 November - This is the message from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) to raise awareness of the global threat from the misuse and overuse of antibiotics for this year's European Antibiotic Awareness Day.

The growing resistance to many antibiotics is a public health threat that has been steadily increasing over the last decades. Many common infections are becoming difficult or even impossible to treat, sometimes turning a simple infection into a life-threatening condition.

For years, society has relied on antibiotics as an indispensable weapon in the fight against infections. The introduction of penicillin in the 1940s changed the face of infectious diseases. Since then antimicrobials have been a mainstay in combating infectious diseases such as pneumonia, respiratory track infections, tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS and hospital-acquired infections. Antibiotics are vital in reducing the risk of complications in complex medical intervention such as hip replacements, organ transplants, cancer chemotherapy and the care of premature babies.

A joint technical report by ECDC and the European Medicines Agency estimates that 25 000 people die each year in the EU from infections caused by drug resistant bacteria. Related costs in healthcare expenses and loss of productivity amount to over 1.5 billion euro.

Data released by the ECDC show that in the past four years there has been a significant increasing trend of combined resistance to multiple antibiotics in both *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *E. Coli* in more than one third of EU and EFTA countries. Alarming, for patients who are infected with these multi-drug resistant bacteria, very few treatment options are available.

A European Parliament Report on the Microbial Challenge, drafted by Mrs Rosbach MEP, urged the prudent use of antimicrobials in human and veterinary medicine. It called for stronger provisions to reduce the overuse of antibiotics in animal husbandry and urged the medical community to ensure that antibiotics are only available on prescription.

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Director General: Peggy Maguire

"All of us – citizens, healthcare professionals, hospitals, veterinary surgeons, farmers who breed animals for food consumption – have a role to play in fighting antimicrobial resistance. Women as the traditional family care givers can help to promote the prudent use of antibiotics in the family environment", said Peggy Maguire, EIWHD Director General. "A simple measure such as thorough hand-washing can help".

There is a need for clear and accessible information through sustained health literacy campaigns to ensure that the general public becomes more aware of the risks of the over-consumptions of antibiotics and the associated dangers.

Research investment in antimicrobials has been practically non-existent due to a lack of encouragement and incentives. Over the last decade no more than 5 new antibiotics have been developed. Faced with this scientific challenge to find new medicines, research efforts under the Commission's Research Framework programme FP7 and the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) will be stepped up. But Antimicrobial medicines will take time to develop and bring to the market.

"This is a wake up call for society. We must make every day **Antibiotic Awareness Day**", said Hildrun Sundseth, EIWHD Board Member.

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<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/eaad/Pages/EAAD2012-multimedia-news-release.aspx>

<http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/topics/topic/amr.htm>

http://ec.europa.eu/health/antimicrobial_resistance/policy/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/infectious-diseases/antimicrobial-drug-resistance/index_en.html

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&mode=XML&language=EN&reference=PE486.077>, Committee on Environment, Public Health and food safety The Microbial Challenge - Rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance

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