Action 2:

Use *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*¹

Prescribing guidelines for antibiotics are a fundamental component of an antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) program because they guide the appropriate use of antibiotics.

*Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*¹ is prepared by an expert group of experienced clinicians, and represents the best available evidence and opinion regarding treatment and prophylaxis for infections in Australia.

Prescribers should use *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*¹ when prescribing antibiotics. The latest version should be readily accessible to clinicians wherever antibiotics are being prescribed.

Health care organisations should have antibiotic prescribing guidelines that take into consideration the advice in the latest version of *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*,¹ reflect common infections relevant to the patient population, the local antimicrobial susceptibilities, and the procedures being performed. They should specify recommended agent(s), dose, route and duration of antibiotic treatment. Guidance for switching from intravenous to oral therapy should also be available. Guidelines should be regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with key clinicians to ensure best practice is upheld. An important part of the review process is ensuring that only the latest versions of guidelines are available for use.²

For conditions not covered by *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*,¹ organisations should refer to the best available evidence, seek expert guidance from infectious disease (ID) specialists, microbiologists and pharmacists, and consult relevant professional associations and colleges.

A lack of awareness about local and national resources that support antibiotic prescribing has been identified as a barrier to appropriate prescribing.³ Organisations can promote adherence to prescribing guidelines by ensuring that the latest version of guidelines are readily accessible such as via the organisation’s intranet, and by informing prescribers of their availability.⁴ Embedding guidelines into clinical decision support systems and electronic prescribing systems increases guideline uptake and concordance, and provides further opportunity to guide appropriate prescribing of antibiotics at the point of care.⁵,⁶ Auditing antibiotic prescribing and antibiotic usage and providing feedback about patient outcomes markedly improves prescribing in accordance with guidelines.²,⁷ Guidelines can also form the basis for educating prescribers on accepted practice for antibiotic prescribing in the organisation.²

Key points:

- Use *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*¹ when prescribing antibiotics
- If local guidelines are required, they should take into account recommendations in *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic*¹ and also reflect local antimicrobial susceptibilities
- Consult the best available evidence and specialist clinicians for guidance on the management of infections not covered by guidelines
- Ensure the latest version of guidelines are readily accessible wherever antibiotics are prescribed
The aim of Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic1 is to assist clinicians by providing clear, practical, authoritative and succinct therapeutic information, to ensure optimal patient management.

Feedback from users of Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic1 is essential to its development, and all comments received during the lifetime of the guideline are considered at the next update.

The strength of the evidence for any given treatment is also fundamental to the development of the recommendations in prescribing guidelines. Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic1 includes detailed information about the process for development of the guidelines, including the way in which ‘evidence rich’ and ‘evidence poor’ areas are dealt with.


The Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Clinical Care Standard.
The Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Clinical Care Standard aims to ensure that a patient with a bacterial infection receives optimal treatment with antibiotics. It provides advice to clinicians, consumers and health services on key components of care related to antibiotic therapy. The AMS Clinical Care Standard is due for publication late 2014. For more information, visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au/ccs

References and further reading

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This document is intended for use by health professionals. It has been created from information contained in Antimicrobial Stewardship in Australian Hospitals 2011 and reviewed by clinical experts. Reasonable care has been taken to ensure this information is accurate at the date of creation. This fact sheet is intended to be used in its original version and can be downloaded from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care web page www.safetyandquality.gov.au

“No action today, no cure tomorrow” is adopted from the WHO World Health Day 2011.