

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Australia working together to preserve the miracle of antibiotics**

**12 November 2012**

Professor Debora Picone, AM, CEO of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care today announced the first Australian Antibiotic Awareness Week, joining the World Health Organization and other international health partners to highlight antimicrobial resistance.

Across the world there is growing concern about the emergence of antimicrobial resistance. It is estimated that 2 million patients acquire healthcare associated infections each year in Europe, of which over half are drug resistant. Patients with infections due to resistant bacteria experience delayed recovery, treatment failure and even death.

With around 19 million prescriptions written every year, Australia has one of the highest rates of antibiotic use in the world. High rates of antibiotic use contribute to the development of resistance. Combating antimicrobial resistance by encouraging the safe and appropriate use of antibiotics in hospitals is a key focus for Australian, state and territory governments.

Professor Picone said “Antibiotic Awareness Week provides an opportunity to raise awareness of patients, health professionals and policy makers about antibiotic resistance and the appropriate use of antibiotics.”

“Antibiotics are a limited resource. We all have a role to play in preserving their miracle for future generations through better prescribing and correct use of antibiotics.”

The Commission, in collaboration with NPS MedicineWise, has been working with state and territories representatives to develop resources and materials to support and promote activities for Antibiotic Awareness Week in hospitals and in the community.

A number of ongoing programs aimed at addressing antibiotic resistance and reducing infections in Australian hospitals are also being lead by the Commission.

One of the most significant recent changes in relation to combating antimicrobial resistance is the development of Standard 3 of the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards “Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infection”.

The NSQHS Standards have been mandated by Health Ministers to be implemented in all public and private hospitals in Australia. Standard 3 ensures that health care services must undertake the appropriate prescribing of antibiotic s and requires that all healthcare services:

- Have an antibiotic management (antimicrobial stewardship) program in place
- Provide clinicians prescribing antibiotics access to current guidelines on antibiotic usage
- Undertake monitoring of antibiotic usage and resistance
- Take action is taken to improve the effectiveness of antibiotic stewardship.

For more information about Antibiotic Awareness Week and the events which are being held around Australia please visit [www.safetyandquality.gov.au](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au).

## **ENDS**

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