World wide strategy to tackle antibiotic resistance

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Today marks the beginning of international Antibiotic Awareness Week and Australia’s Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley, and Australia’s Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp have emphasised the urgent need for the public and the medical, veterinary and agricultural sectors to work together to tackle antibiotic resistance which is one of this century’s major threats to human health.

“Inappropriate use of antibiotics is a major driver of antibiotic resistance, and we are still seeing the rising resistance of pathogens - such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and E.coli - to the antibiotics being prescribed in both human and animal health,” Professor Baggoley said.

"It is time for the community and clinicians to understand that antibiotics are precious pharmaceuticals needed in so many circumstances, for example during surgery, during transplants and for a range of infections. The more resistance develops, the more simple infections won't be able to be treated."

Professor Baggoley said it is becoming universally acknowledged that the world is moving to a post-antibiotic era with no new antibiotics coming onto the market, this is a very serious situation that must be reversed.

Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp said while the prevalence of multidrug resistant microbes in animals appears low in Australia and there is little direct evidence within Australia of the spread of the most serious drug-resistant organisms from animals to humans, their transmission from animal to human strains of the bacteria – via poultry, pigs, cattle, dogs and horses - is documented in North America and Europe.

“If we can improve data collection and information sharing across the human and veterinary health and agriculture sectors we can begin to develop an integrated management plan for tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in Australia,” Dr Schipp said.

“Ongoing, systemic national surveillance and monitoring of antibiotic use and AMR in animals is required to complement our surveillance and monitoring of human antibiotic use and AMR.”

President of the Australian Veterinary Association, Dr Ben Gardiner added: “We are fortunate in Australia to have good controls on the use of antibiotics in animals, particularly in food animals. However, there’s a lot more to learn about this critical issue. We will be focussing on monitoring and reporting of antibiotic use and resistance in both humans and animals to be able to more effectively address the problem.”

The Antibiotic Awareness Week 2013 in Australia is being spearheaded by the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care and CEO, Professor Debora Picone, said many people take for granted that antibiotics will always be available, but the lifespan of antibiotics is growing shorter and shorter due to AMR.
"At the same time, global research and investment in developing new antibiotics is shrinking. When it comes to planning our antibiotic resistance response, there is much to be done," she said.

NPS MedicineWise CEO Dr Lynn Weekes says that a new survey of 1,000 Australians^ shows that there is still a way to go in ensuring people realise that fighting antibiotic resistance is everyone’s problem.

“Our new research findings indicate that many people are putting their faith in health professionals to solve this problem, with 84% of people surveyed thinking that health professionals can help stop the spread of antibiotic resistance in Australia, while only 51% of people surveyed think that they can make a difference themselves – but we know that individual behaviour can have a big impact on making sure these miracle medicines will still work when we really need them,” says Dr Weekes.

For more information go to www.safetyandquality.gov.au/aaw2013 or watch Australia’s Chief Medical Officer, Professor Chris Baggoley, and Australia’s Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Mark Schipp speak on the issues at www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHq0_uKyM-c.

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For more information on the survey by NPS MedicineWise please contact Stephanie Childs or Erin Jardine on 02 8217 8667, 0419 618 365, schilda@nps.org.au or ejardine@nps.org.au

Background:
Human and animal health experts are working closely together, as part of participation in the “One Health” worldwide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaboration and communication to achieve a reduction in antibiotic resistance in human clinical practice, veterinary practice and agriculture.

The World Health Organization has identified antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as one of the key global health issues facing our generation.

Antibiotic resistance is a form of drug resistance where some bacterial species survive exposure to one or more antibiotics and become resistant to multiple antibiotics. Such pathogens are known as multidrug resistant (MDR) or, more colloquially, “superbugs”. Microbes, rather than people or animals, develop resistance to antibiotics.

The Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care, NPS MedicineWise, the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) are each playing important lead roles today in the fight against antibiotic resistance.

Web references to each of these organisations:
- Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care: www.safetyandquality.gov.au
- Australian Veterinary Association (AVA): www.ava.com.au
- Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA): www.apvma.gov.au

^ Poll of 1000 Australians aged 18 and over conducted by UMR research in July 2013.