

PRESS RELEASE

Multidrug antibiotic resistance increasing in Europe

Stockholm, 16 November 2012

On the occasion of the 5th edition of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day, ECDC releases new EU-wide data on antibiotic resistance and consumption. Antibiotic resistance still remains a major European and global public health problem and is, for a large part, driven by misuse of antibiotics. ECDC data show that over the last 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 the EU/EEA countries. In several Member States, between 25 percent and up to more than 60 percent of *Klebsiella pneumoniae* from bloodstream infections show combined resistance to multiple antibiotics. Options for treatment of patients who are infected with such multidrug-resistant bacteria are limited to only few last-line antibiotics.

Antibiotic resistance is still a very serious threat to the health of European citizens, because it leads to increasing healthcare costs, extra length of stay in the hospital, treatment failures, and sometimes death. Speaking at a press event organised by ECDC and the European Commission in Brussels, ECDC Director Marc Sprenger said: *"ECDC data show that over the last several years, there has been a Europe-wide increase of antibiotic resistance and of multidrug resistance in Gram-negative bacteria such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). This means that, for patients who are infected with these bacteria, few last-line antibiotics, like carbapenems, remain available"*.

Furthermore, ECDC data show that consumption of carbapenems – a major last-line class of antibiotics – increased significantly in EU/EEA countries from 2007 to 2010. This is the likely consequence of increasing multidrug resistance in Gram-negative infections, such as bloodstream infections or pneumonia, since carbapenems are often used to treat such infections. However, the percentage of carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella pneumoniae* is already high and increasing in some countries in the EU.

He added: *"There are, in contrast, some good news: in the past few years, meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), has shown either a decrease or a stabilisation in most EU countries. Nevertheless, we must remain vigilant, as the percentage of *Staphylococcus aureus* resistant to meticillin remains above 25% in more than one fourth of the reporting countries, mainly in Southern and Eastern Europe"*.

Speaking about the European Commission's Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance adopted last year, Mrs Testori Coggi, Director General of DG Health & Consumers, added: *"In order to successfully address antimicrobial resistance, we need to tackle the problem in a comprehensive approach, in which all relevant parties and stakeholders live up to their responsibility to combat this serious health threat in their respective areas. Therefore, there is no hierarchy of actions in the Action Plan, as all aspects are interrelated. Notably, the promotion of prudent use of antibiotics both in human and veterinary medicine, the development of new antimicrobial products and prevention of infections must proceed in parallel"*.

Robert-Jan Smits, Director-General for Research & Innovation at the European Commission explained: *"The worrying growth of antibiotic resistance identified by ECDC calls for a dedicated research effort. We therefore have invested this year more money than ever into research on antimicrobial resistance, to keep our ability to fight deadly infections. We*

are working together with EU member states and the industry to use existing antimicrobials more intelligently and to develop urgently needed new antibiotics".

ECDC Director Marc Sprenger added: "Tackling a complex issue such as antibiotic resistance requires a multi-faceted approach that the European Commission already laid down in its Action Plan last year. We must continue working on those actions together. Furthermore, it is crucial to join forces around the world and mark global solidarity against this threat. This year WHO/Europe is supporting the initiative and a range of activities have also been organised this week in the United States, in Canada and in Australia. Wherever we are on this planet and whatever our occupation, each of us has a role to play in keeping antibiotics working. ECDC will continue to keep it at the forefront of our minds with good quality scientific data and our commitment to the European Antibiotic Awareness Day".

MORE INFORMATION:

About European Antibiotic Awareness Day

The European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a European health initiative coordinated by ECDC which aims to provide a platform and support for national campaigns on the prudent use of antibiotics. Each year across Europe, the European Antibiotic Awareness Day is marked by national campaigns on the prudent use of antibiotics during the week of 18 November. Prudent use means only using antibiotics when they are needed, with the correct dose, dosage intervals and duration of the course. This year, the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe is also supporting the initiative.

For more information, visit: <http://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu>

European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network (EARS-Net)

Further information on surveillance of antibiotic resistance in EU/EEA countries is available from the EARS-Net website and interactive database: <http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/activities/surveillance/EARS-Net/Pages/index.aspx>

Other relevant links

ECDC/EMA Joint Technical Report: The bacterial challenge: time to react

http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/0909_TER_The_Bacterial_Challenge_Time_to_React.pdf

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. Action plan against the rising threats from Antimicrobial Resistance. COM (2011) 748.

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/docs/communication_amr_2011_748_en.pdf

WHO/Europe – Antimicrobial resistance

<http://www.euro.who.int/amr>

Campaign in the United States – Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work

<http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/campaign-materials/week/index.html>

Campaign in Canada – AntibioticAwareness.ca

<http://antibioticawareness.ca/>

Campaign in Australia – Antibiotic Awareness Week

http://www.nps.org.au/bemedicinewise/antibiotic_resistance/antibiotic_awareness_week

Further information

More information on antibiotic resistance is available on our website: <http://ecdc.europa.eu>

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The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) is an EU agency tasked with identifying, assessing and communicating threats to human health posed by infectious diseases. It supports the work of public health authorities in the EU and EEA/EFTA Member States.