



For Immediate Release

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AntibioticAwareness.ca

APRIL 7TH IS WORLD HEALTH DAY 2011: “NO ACTION TODAY, NO CURE TOMORROW”

Canadian stakeholders respond to the World Health Organization’s call to counter the emergence of highly resistant “superbugs”.

April 7, 2011 – On this World Health Day, Canadian health organizations are responding to the World Health Organization’s (WHO) call to help preserve the life-saving power of antimicrobials. With a commitment to review a six-point policy package that WHO issued today to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR), several national organizations are working together to support action in Canada.

The response is part of an ongoing Canadian initiative, AntibioticAwareness.ca, coordinated by numerous health-related organizations across the country. These groups recently partnered to promote the prudent use of antimicrobials and fight the threat of antibiotic-resistant bacteria through the use of educational resources for professionals and the public.

“Canadians rely on antibiotics and other antimicrobial drugs to treat conditions once considered life threatening, but many of these wonder drugs are becoming ineffective due to resistant organisms,” says Dr. Margaret Fast, Scientific Director of the National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCCID). “Governments and non-governmental organizations have a shared responsibility to respond to WHO’s call for commitment from governments to address AMR nationally.”

The policy steps recommended by WHO include:

- develop and implement a comprehensive, financed national plan;
- strengthen surveillance and laboratory capacity;
- ensure uninterrupted access to essential medicines of assured quality;
- regulate and promote rational use of medicines;
- enhance infection prevention and control; and
- foster innovation and research and development for new tools.

“Antibiotic resistance affects all Canadians, not only those in hospitals. Today we are seeing rates of resistance that would have been unthinkable even 10 years ago,” says Dr. Lynora Saxinger, Chair of the Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease (AMMI) Canada Antimicrobial Stewardship and Resistance Committee.

Saxinger and other infectious disease specialists are voicing their concerns at the AMMI (Canada)-CACMID Annual Conference – a gathering of Canadian experts in clinical microbiology and infectious diseases – which opens today, coincidentally, on World Health Day. Many of today’s discussions will revolve around emerging problems in multidrug resistance from a Canadian perspective, including *C. difficile* infections and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

Saxinger says community associated MRSA skin and bloodstream infections, as well as urinary infections caused by highly resistant *E. coli*, are alarmingly commonplace, with new types of resistant organisms emerging regularly. “The key to control is judicious use of antibiotics. We know that antibiotics taken for a bad cold, ‘just in case’, greatly increases the likelihood of a person carrying and therefore possibly spreading resistant bacteria to susceptible people. Needless

antibiotic use also increases one's likelihood, by five- to 10 times, of a subsequent pneumonia being caused by resistant bacteria."

Dr. Craig Stephen, professor, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Calgary, says it is important to recognize that AMR is an issue that crosses boundaries between people, animals and their shared environments. "People and animals can share the same disease-causing organisms, and antimicrobial resistance can pass back and forth between them through a variety of routes – from direct contact, to the food we eat or the water we drink," he explains.

Stephen says a comprehensive plan is needed to stem the tide of increasing drug resistance. "It must take into account ways to promote reduced and rational use of antimicrobials in animals, as well as manage the environmental routes through which drug resistance is shared between people and animals."

Canadian partners joining to recognize the global threat of antimicrobial resistance through AntibioticAwareness.ca include:

- National Collaborating Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCCID);
- Association of Medical Microbiology and Infectious Disease (AMMI) Canada;
- Community and Hospital Infection Control Association (CHICA) Canada;
- Canadian Foundation for Infectious Diseases (CFID);
- Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS);
- Do Bugs Need Drugs (DBND);
- Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI);
- Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA); and
- Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA).

The AMMI (Canada) – CACMID Annual Conference is a joint effort by AMMI Canada and the Canadian Association for Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (CACMID). This year's conference continues through Saturday.

Media interested in speaking with experts on World Health Day can contact Renée Barclay, Communications Coordinator, NCCID, at (204) 688-6490 or email rbarclay@icid.com.

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For more information, visit AntibioticAwareness.ca or contact:

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