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PRESS RELEASE

Multidrug resistant bacteria remain a public health issue in Europe

Brussels, 16 November 2010

On the occasion of the European Antibiotic Awareness Day, ECDC is releasing new European-wide surveillance data on antibiotic resistance from the European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network (EARS-Net). With annually up to 400,000 patients¹ reported to suffer from infections resistant to multiple antibiotics, the data show that antibiotic resistance remains a public health problem across the European Union. In *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, a common cause of infection amongst hospital patients, an emerging trend is the proportion of resistance to powerful last-line antibiotics, such as carbapenems. Proportions of resistance range from less than 1% to more than 25%. Without effective last-line antibiotics, doctors face the dilemma of not having any treatment options left.

Speaking today at the launch event for European Antibiotic Awareness Day in the European Parliament, ECDC Director, Marc Sprenger, said:

"Antibiotic resistance remains a serious threat to patient safety, reducing options for treatment and increasing lengths of hospital stay, as well as patient morbidity and mortality. However the news is not all gloomy. European-wide surveillance data from EARS-Net – a network coordinated by ECDC – show that a significant number of countries have reported decreasing trends for MRSA for the second consecutive year. Notwithstanding, we are seeing increasing multi-drug resistance and the emergence of resistance to last-line antibiotics in European hospitals which we must take urgent action to address."

The focus of this year's European Antibiotic Awareness Day is promoting prudent antibiotic use in hospitals in order to turn the tide on antibiotic resistance. Whereas, up to 50% of antibiotic use in hospitals can be inappropriate^{2,3}. Prudent use means only using antibiotics when they are needed, with the correct dose, dosage intervals and duration of the course. Activities to promote prudent use of antibiotics are taking place in 36 different European countries, including all member states of the European Union. An EU-level launch event was organised today in the European Parliament to draw attention to the many national campaigns on prudent antibiotic use.

Marc Sprenger, ECDC Director, stressed: *"ECDC has been involved in coordinating the European Antibiotic Awareness Day since 2008. We are very proud that 36 countries are joining efforts to mark this day. Campaigns to promote prudent antibiotic use across Europe are bringing some good results, as in the case of MRSA. We are also happy that this year the United States' Get Smart About Antibiotics Week is being launched simultaneously during the week of 18 November in an effort to show global solidarity"*.

¹ ECDC-EMA Technical Report: *The Bacterial Challenge: Time to React*, Stockholm, Sept 2009

² Davey P, Brown E, Fenelon L, Finch R, Gould I, Hartman G, et al. *Interventions to improve antibiotic prescribing practices for hospital inpatients. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2005(4):CD003543.*

³ Willemsen I, Groenhuijzen A, Bogaers D, Stuurman A, van Keulen P, Kluytmans J. *Appropriateness of antimicrobial therapy measured by repeated prevalence surveys. Antimicrob Agents Chemother. 2007 Mar;51(3):864-7.*

About European Antibiotic Awareness Day

The European Antibiotic Awareness Day is a European health initiative which aims to provide a platform and support for national campaigns about prudent antibiotic use. Across Europe each year the European Antibiotic Awareness Day is marked by national campaigns on prudent antibiotic use during the week of 18 November. The focus of this year's European Antibiotic Awareness Day is promoting prudent antibiotic use in hospitals. Prudent use means only using antibiotics when they are needed, with the correct dose, dosage intervals and duration of the course.

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

Links

Further information on surveillance of antibiotic resistance can be accessed from the EARS-Net website:

<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/activities/surveillance/EARS-Net/Pages/index.aspx>

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

United States Campaign - Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work

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

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.