

PHARMAC

Pharmaceutical Management Agency

Media release

NZ public responding to antibiotics message – PHARMAC

People are now less likely to expect an antibiotic to treat colds or flu than they were three years ago, research carried out by Colmar Brunton has found.

The research, on the effects of the Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign, shows that just over half the people who visit their doctor to treat colds or the flu now expect an antibiotic. That compares with 80 percent who expected an antibiotic in 2000.

The campaign, co-ordinated by PHARMAC for the fifth year, promotes the message that antibiotics can't treat viral infections like colds or flu. At the same time, it encourages people to visit their doctor if they have any doubts. It is run in conjunction with general practitioner groups and this year also involved Plunket and the Pharmaceutical Society.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the results of the Colmar Brunton evaluation, and an analysis of prescribing data, show that the messages in the campaign are still getting through.

“We're delighted the campaign continues to have a positive effect,” says Dr Moodie.

“Antibiotics have an important role to play in fighting infections, however it is important they are used appropriately.

“The effectiveness of the campaign is demonstrated both by patients' heightened awareness and a resulting fall in people expecting antibiotics for colds and flu. This is good news, as unnecessary use of antibiotics can lead to an increase in resistance to them.”

Overall, there were about 20,000 fewer antibiotics prescriptions written than a year previously (a 0.77 percent decrease). More noticeable was a 4.4 percent reduction in antibiotics prescribed for children under 6, a factor which tied in with the involvement of Plunket in this year's campaign.

Dr Moodie adds that while overall awareness has increased, there were still about a third of people surveyed who were unaware of the campaign's key message. This indicated that there were potentially benefits in continuing to run the campaign in future years.

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