



Wise Use of Antibiotics

Antibiotic and virus take their battle to the streets

A giant antibiotic did its best to fight off a larger-than-life virus this week in a timely reminder for New Zealanders this winter.

It was all in the interests of showing that antibiotics just don't kill viral infections such as colds and flu. This is the important message of PHARMAC's Wise Use of Antibiotics Campaign launched this week.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says the street theatre was a visual way to remind people of the importance of using antibiotics only when they need them, so they remain effective.

“Antibiotics are very useful treatments to fight infections caused by bacteria, and it is vital that this continues. The side-effect of using them for illnesses such as colds and the flu is that it can increase the risk of bacteria becoming resistant, and the antibiotics becoming ineffective.”

Dr Peter Moodie says the campaign, now in its sixth year, has already led to greater vigilance about the level of antibiotic use in New Zealand. Latest statistics show that in the past six years there has been a 16% decrease in prescriptions.

“We've made a lot of progress and what we are saying is that we want to continue down this path of ensuring that antibiotics are used appropriately.”

He says it is understandable that when people are suffering from a flu or cold they want a remedy to make them feel better. However, an antibiotic is not the answer. |

“Old fashioned remedies such as rest and plenty of fluids are still the best ways to combat the winter ills. While it may feel comforting to have a prescription for antibiotics, the reality is that it could do more harm than good.

“If you are feeling under the weather, the best approach is to consult your health professional as they are trained to tell the difference between a bacterial and a viral infection.”

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Dr Peter Moodie says the street theatre was well received, with people taking a genuine interest in what the campaign was about.

“It was heartening to hear that people were aware of the campaign and through efforts in previous years were aware of the importance of using antibiotics wisely. However with winter upon us, it is a timely reminder to ensure people use them appropriately.”

The PHARMAC campaign is being supported by the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand, the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and the Plunket Society.

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For more information call (021) 429-212.

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