



wise use of Antibiotics

Media Release

New Zealand plays its role in international war against resistance

New Zealand is continuing to do its bit in the international fight against bacterial resistance, with the launch of PHARMAC's Wise Use of Antibiotics Campaign today.

The campaign, now in its sixth year, aims to encourage people to use antibiotics wisely, to ensure they remain effective when they are needed. If these treatments are overused it can lead to resistance.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says like other countries, New Zealand is realising the need only to use antibiotics where they are truly indicated. Internationally, health professionals are warning a global over-prescribing of antibiotics may lead to common infections being untreatable.

Dr Peter Moodie says the campaign has had a marked impact upon the intake of antibiotics in New Zealand. However this momentum needs to continue.

“Over the past six years we've seen a drop of about 16% in the number of antibiotic prescriptions. That's a real credit to New Zealand – but we need to maintain our vigilance and ensure antibiotics are used only when they will be effective.”

Dr Peter Moodie says the drop in prescribing shows that people are more willing to accept that they don't need an antibiotic for a viral infection, and are working with their doctors to find alternative treatments.

“Health professionals are right behind this campaign and are very supportive in educating patients about wise antibiotic use.”

One age group that has seen a significant drop in unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions is children under six. Last year saw a 4.4% reduction in the number of antibiotic prescriptions for that age bracket than the year before.

Internationally, young children are being over-prescribed antibiotics. One Canadian study showed over 50 percent of all prescriptions for pre-schoolers were unnecessary.

Both health professionals and the public need to work together to ensure illnesses are treated in the best possible way, says Dr Peter Moodie.

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“People still need to visit their doctor to see if they have either a viral or bacterial infection. If they are suffering from a virus such as a cold or flu, the best medicine is plenty of rest and fluid – antibiotics are not going to have any effect.”

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

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For more information call (021) 429-212.