

*Media release*

## **Antibiotics awareness up, but plenty of work to do – PHARMAC**

An evaluation of the annual Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign shows people's understanding of the correct use of antibiotics for colds and flu is continuing to grow.

The evaluation, by market research company Colmar Brunton for Government drug-funding agency PHARMAC, shows that 65 percent of people surveyed agree that antibiotics aren't effective against colds and flu. This is the highest percentage of people to understand the role of antibiotics since PHARMAC's involvement with the campaign commenced in 1999.

Wise Use of Antibiotics is an annual campaign, funded and co-ordinated by PHARMAC, that aims to promote the correct use of antibiotics during the winter colds and flu season. Antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections, and since colds and flu are caused by viruses, antibiotics have no effect as a treatment for them.

Since the campaign began, there has been a 15 percent decrease in prescriptions for the most common forms of antibiotics, and people's understanding of their role has increased.

PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie says New Zealanders are doing their part to help antibiotics remain effective for future generations.

"We're delighted that people's understanding of the correct role of antibiotics continues to grow," says PHARMAC Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie.

"If we use antibiotics correctly, that ensures that bacterial infections are treated and that bacterial resistance is reduced, so that antibiotics continue to be effective. We know that antibiotic resistance is of concern both in New Zealand and internationally, so this is helping to play our part to keep them effective into the future."

The evaluation also shows that 85 percent of people surveyed agree that the best treatment for colds and flu is rest and drinking plenty of fluids. This is on a par with the 87 percent peak shown in the sample taken for the 2002 campaign.

Dr Moodie added that though understanding was still growing, a large number of people still misunderstood the role of antibiotics, and this underlined the need for the campaign's messages to be repeated regularly.

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The survey, which sampled 500 people aged 15 and over from throughout New Zealand, also revealed:

- Only 25 percent of people who had a cold or the flu sought medical advice or treatment;
- 54 percent of people who sought treatment expected to receive antibiotics;
- There was a high degree of satisfaction with the treatment people received (92 percent);
- Only 10 percent of people thought their cold or flu wasn't being treated if they weren't prescribed an antibiotic

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For more information call (021) 429-212.