



Media release

ANTIBIOTICS CAMPAIGN CONTINUES TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS

New Zealanders' attitudes towards antibiotics are showing a change for the better but there is still room for improvement, a survey released today by Government drug funding agency PHARMAC shows.

The Colmar Brunton survey of 500 New Zealanders showed that fewer people going to their doctor to be treated for colds and flu were expecting to receive an antibiotic. There was also an increase in the number of people who agreed the best way to treat colds and flu was by resting and drinking fluids.

The survey's results have been released at the launch of the 2007 Wise Use of Antibiotics campaign. The campaign, now in its 10th year, emphasises that antibiotics don't treat colds or the flu, but if people have any doubt they should see their doctor.

In the latest survey, 53% of people expected to receive an antibiotic, compared with 59% the previous year and 79% the year before that.

In line with this reduced expectation, there was a continuing decrease in the number of people who received antibiotics – down to 58% from 69% the previous year.

And nine out of 10 people surveyed agreed that the best treatment for colds and flu is rest and drinking fluids.

"The survey results are encouraging and indicate that the messages from the campaign are getting through," says PHARMAC's Medical Director Dr Peter Moodie.

"But there is still room for improvement. For example, a quarter of people surveyed said they felt disappointed if they turned up to a doctor with a cold or the flu and went away without an antibiotic. Young adults (aged 20-29) appear to have the highest expectations of all."

"The survey underlines our belief that high expectation of antibiotics is linked to high and sometimes inappropriate prescribing. And it is important that antibiotics are not over-prescribed as this can lead to bacterial resistance developing."

Bacterial resistance to antibiotics is on the increase internationally and New Zealand is no exception. Figures from the crown research institute ESR show increasing resistance to six of nine disease-causing bacteria.

Dr Moodie says that people who are prescribed an antibiotic by their doctor should complete the full course.

"Take the lot, no matter what. That is one of the campaign's key messages and an important way to ensure these vital drugs are used well.

"It is just as important for people to remember that antibiotics don't do colds and flu, but that they should see their doctor if they have any doubt about the sort of infection they have. If in doubt, check it out."

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