

Office of the Commissioner

Antimicrobial Stewardship: A Call to Action

April 9, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to enlist your help in reducing the number of antibiotic-resistant infections that occur in Connecticut. Over the past several years, resistance to antibiotics and other antimicrobials has been identified by national and international experts as a serious threat to public health. Some infections are no longer easily treated with antimicrobials, and indeed many bacteria are now resistant to more than one class of antibiotic. This public health concern is shared by many public health leaders, and is the impetus behind this call to action.

Your actions are critical to reducing the number of antibiotic resistant infections. Studies have repeatedly shown that patients look to their health care provider as their most trusted source of health information. Your efforts to inform and counsel patients on the importance of judicious antimicrobial use can have immense benefit. Even though many patients request antibiotics, and recommending judicious use can be difficult, being stewards of antimicrobials is necessary to saving lives. Here are some of the ways that you can take action:

1. Talk to patients frankly about the need for antibiotics;
2. Refer to evidence-based, clinical guidelines before prescribing;
3. Talk to colleagues and pharmacists about judicious antibiotic use;
4. Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for information and educational resources for healthcare providers and patients:
 - a. Get Smart (resources both for patients and for healthcare providers)
<http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/>
 - b. *Antibiotic Resistance Threats Report 2013*
<http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/threat-report-2013/>
 - c. Toolkits <http://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cre/cre-toolkit/>
5. Access professional resources:
 - a. Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. (APIC) <http://www.apic.org/>
 - b. Society for Healthcare and Epidemiology in America (SHEA)
<http://www.shea-online.org/>
 - c. Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA)
<http://www.idsociety.org/Index.aspx>.
6. Be a champion of antimicrobial stewardship within your practice or facility.

I urge you to take action immediately to establish effective antimicrobial stewardship programs, reduce antibiotic resistance and save lives. If you are already engaged in antimicrobial stewardship I encourage you to assess your efforts and, if indicated, redouble them. Thank you for your work to protect public health in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Jewel Mullen, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., Commissioner