



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TO SAVE ANTIBIOTICS, MAKE THEM A SEPARATE CLASS OF DRUGS

BOSTON, MA--April 7, 2011--"Antibiotics should be categorized as a separate class of drugs," Stuart B. Levy, M.D., President of the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) and Tufts University School of Medicine Professor says.

Levy, an internationally recognized authority, suggests that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classify antibiotics as "societal drugs" to bring increased awareness of their misuse among patients and practitioners and to provide stronger incentives for industry to develop new drugs to combat resistant infections.

"Antibiotics are different from all other drugs," Levy explains. "Unlike, for example, drugs administered for heart disease, which affect the treated person and have no impact on anyone else, antibiotics affect the treated individuals and those sharing their health facility, home, and other environments" One British study found that if one person was taking an antibiotic for acne, others residing in the same home had 1000 times more multi-drug resistant bacteria on their skin than did members of a household without antibiotic use.

This proposal is being made in conjunction with World Health Day (April 7th), which is focused on antimicrobial resistance sponsored by the World Health Organization and collaborators including APUA. Continuing antibiotic misuse and a dwindling antibiotic pipeline has created a global public health crisis.

Antibiotics affect society at large by giving a survival advantage to the drug resistant organisms, which then spread resistance to other bacteria. Superbugs which emerge in one patient, animal, or hospital, proliferate quickly and spread easily from one patient to another. The recent outbreaks of the dangerous NDM-1 resistance gene and the CRKP Superbug in California are the latest warnings about the increasing danger of antibiotic resistance. More than 350 cases of CRKP were reported at healthcare facilities in Los Angeles County, mostly among elderly patients long-term care facilities.

"Over the past 30 years there have been scores of expert reports calling for voluntary changes in use of antibiotics by physicians and food animal producers but unnecessary antibiotic use is still prevalent. Educational programs are helpful but as in other areas of healthcare, it is the monetary and regulatory incentives that will get people's attention and drive change," says Kathleen Young, Executive Director of APUA. According to the FDA, over 80% of antibiotics sold in the United States in 2009 were reserved for livestock and poultry.

According to a recently completed study sponsored by APUA, the estimated annual cost of antibiotic resistance in U.S. hospitals is greater than \$20 billion and adds 6.4 – 12.7 hospital days per patient stay.

About APUA

Founded in 1981, the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) is a leading non government organization based at Tufts Univ. School of Medicine in Boston, Mass whose mission is preserving the power of existing antibiotics and increasing access to needed new agents. (www.apua.org)

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