

Antibiotics as Commodities: Need to Save the Cures **APUA Position Statement**

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Boston, MA (January 13, 2009) The Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) cautions against a growing trend among large chain stores such as Wal-Mart, Stop and Shop, and Publix, to conduct marketing campaigns with discounted or free prescription antibiotics. While affordable medicine is a worthy goal, providing free or discounted antibiotics on a massive scale sends the wrong message and may result in antibiotic misuse and costly increases of antibiotic resistant infections.

The Centers for Disease Control and other medical groups have documented that half of the medically prescribed antibiotics used in this country are not needed and that this antibiotic overuse is already leading to loss of antibiotic effectiveness and treatment complications countrywide. Alarmed by the rise in drug resistant infections, the CDC, APUA and other groups have collaborated on educational programs to caution doctors and patients to respect the value of these life saving agents and decrease unnecessary antibiotic use.

These commercial antibiotic discount campaigns fly in the face of these educational programs by portraying antibiotics as a “dime a dozen.” The cut rate antibiotics may end up less expensive than symptomatic relief medicines which are the more appropriate treatments for colds and flu. Another concern is that the lack of control on refills and stockpiling which will lead to misuse and overuse over time-even with a prescription.

Some of the antibiotic discount campaigns confound even more with ads such as, “with cold and flu season in full swing we want to do what we can to help keep you and your family feeling your best during the winter months.” However antibiotics are not effective against colds or flu because these conditions are caused by viruses- not bacteria.

Antibiotics are uniquely societal drugs because they exert a selective pressure on the environment which can result in increased drug resistant bacteria not only in the individual but in people living in the same the household, facility and community.

We look to all pharmacies, physicians and patients to be more respectful and careful with antibiotics. Working together we can slow the emergence of drug resistance and save these cures for future generations.

(For more info see www.apua.org.)