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Press Release: June 24, 2008 Senate Hearing: Emergence of the Superbug: Antimicrobial Resistance in the U.S.

**Federal Action Needed to Fill Antibiotic Pipeline**

BOSTON, MA – June 24, 2008

Antibiotic resistance is one of the major public health threats of the 21st century and the focus of today's Senate hearing, Emergence of the Superbug: Antimicrobial Resistance in the US. Resistant infections pose a threat to US healthcare's reliance on high tech medicine. Resistant bacteria also represent a potential resource for adversaries to exploit in building biological weapons.

Over \$20 billion is billed to Medicare annually for hospital-acquired infections, with increasing numbers which are drug resistant. Increased funding is needed to support government agencies and private sector organizations engaged in control of the escalating antibiotic resistant problem. In the face of increasing antibiotic resistant infections, the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA) is supporting new legislative action to curb antibiotic misuse and accelerate new drug development.

Antibiotics are different from other drugs because their use in one human or animal has broad impacts on entire communities. Antibiotics exert a strong selective pressure on bacteria which can then transfer resistance traits responsible for increasing multidrug resistant infections. "We need new drugs to treat these difficult resistant infections," says Dr. Stuart Levy, President of APUA and Professor at Tufts Medical School. APUA favors designation of antibiotics as a special regulatory class of drugs. "This would enable unique economic incentives for antibiotic development and foster better stewardship once they are on the market," states Dr. Levy.

APUA advocates a three-pronged antibiotic resistance control strategy. First, the US needs to institute collection of data on human and animal antibiotic use and surveillance of resistance to serve as early warnings and guide interventions. Next, incentives are needed to entice pharmacy companies to stay in the antibiotic business. Finally, stronger stewardship is needed to protect antibiotics already on the market. "Without this three-pronged approach, our society could soon face a future of unaffordable drugs and untreatable infections," says Dr. Levy. See [www.apua.org](http://www.apua.org).