GP alert from HPSC on rising antibiotic resistance rates

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) is urging GPs to take a closer look at their antibiotic prescribing practices in light of rising antibiotic resistance rates.

The last quarter of 2008 saw a dramatic rise in the resistance rates in Streptococcus pneumoniae (*‘pneumococcus’*) in Ireland. Roughly a third (32%) of the 124 isolates tested were penicillin non-susceptible, up from 21% the previous quarter. This is the highest level recorded since surveillance began in 1999 and is considerably higher than the European average (median 7% in 2007).

International experience indicates that rates of resistance in *Streptococcus pneumoniae* relate particularly to antibiotic use in the community. High resistance rates relate to high levels of antibiotic use in general, and of broad spectrum antibiotics in particular. Antibiotic use in the community in Ireland has been rising steadily since 1999, including increasing use of broad spectrum antibiotics.

ICGP CME tutors are currently rolling out a series of CME sessions on antibiotic prescribing in conjunction with the Department of General Practice and the School of Pharmacy, UCC. Guidelines for appropriate antibiotic use are also being developed and disseminated in conjunction with the CME programme. In the meantime, it is important that GPs observe the following advice:

- Prescribe antibiotics only where there is reasonably clear-cut evidence of bacterial infection.
- If antibiotic therapy is required, ensure that the antibiotic selected is no more broad spectrum than is required to cover likely infecting organisms and is not given for longer than necessary.
- Ensure patients are aware of the risks of taking antibiotics unnecessarily and, if antibiotic therapy is required, that patients take their antibiotics as prescribed and complete the course. An information leaflet for patients on appropriate use of antibiotics is available on the HSE website under www.hse.ie/eng/newsmedia/Get_better_without_antibiotics_leaflet.pdf

Keep dates free in June for the annual ICGP summer school

Following a really successful Summer School in June 2008, the ICGP will be hosting the 3rd Annual Summer School. Many people did not note the dates in time last year and missed out on the event, so it is important to now make that note in your diary.

What most attendees from June 2008 agreed on was that it was the most relaxed learning they had ever engaged in. They had an opportunity to mix and chat with peers and colleagues, learn from each other and engage with the experts in a small group setting.

The feedback was very positive and this year the College hopes many more will be able to take the opportunity to participate in this education event.

The Third Annual ICGP Summer School will be held from Tuesday to

| Friday, June 23-26, 2009 |

See the full academic programme on page 50.

It is possible for individuals or practices to book for as few or as many half-days as suits their needs – you can attend for a half-day, a full-day, two days or for the full programme, with attendance fees reflecting the desire to accommodate those who wish to avail of the full programme.

Expressions of interest can be sent to Email: louise.nolan@icgp.ie. Put that note in your diary today!

News in brief

- The College Library and Information Service provides an overview of some of the evidence-based medicine sources used to answer common problems/clinical queries which arise in day-to-day practice. The topics chosen for this month are postnatal depression and childhood. See www.icgp.ie/library

- The College Prospectus for all courses including our range of e-learning courses is now available. All queries on our e-learning courses should be addressed to Louise Nolan at the ICGP, Email: louise.nolan@icgp.ie

- Dr Sinead Murphy has been appointed as programme director of the ICGP Network of Establishing GPs (NEGs). Dr Murphy is a graduate of NUI Galway and did her GP training with the Midlands GP training programme. She has been working as a GP in Galway for several years and recently opened her own practice there, the Galway Bay Medical Centre. Sinead was a founder member of NEGs in 2003 and has been the western representative on the NEGs steering committee since then. She is looking forward to this new challenge and hopes to build on the good work already achieved by previous programme directors Drs John Ball, Shane McKeogh and Deirdre Burns.

Pictured at the top of Mount Brandon in Kerry are fourth-year GP registrars of the Cork Scheme: standing (l-r): Caitlin O’Connor, Alice Bailey, Fiona Kiely, Claire Buckley, Karen Buckley and Oonagh Molloy; and kneeling (l-r): Susan Jordan and Norma Browne. They were accompanied by Kerry trainer, Dr Adrian O’Gara, his wife Marie and guide Martin O’Connor
Submissions welcome for Sheppard Memorial Prize

The Sheppard Memorial Prize 2009 is a biennial prize awarded by the Royal College of General Practitioners in Ireland. It consists of two grants of €500 each for original essays from an undergraduate and a postgraduate student.

The content is to be any subject pertaining to general practice in Ireland, past or present. Word count to be minimum 1,500 and maximum 3,000. The format is usually as an essay, but original research can be included.

The closing date for submissions is Friday, September 25, 2009.

Submissions (preferably in electronic format) are to be sent to: Monika Lauder, Royal College of General Practitioners, Hospitality House, 16-20 South Cumberland Street, Dublin 2. Email: roi@rcgp.org.uk or Tel: 01 676 3740.

Partnership with patients project asks for GP views

The aim of the ‘Promoting Partnership with Patients’ initiative of the ICGP is to enhance the College’s awareness of the needs of patients and to foster a partnership between patients and the College.

Following on from last month’s introduction to the new ICGP project (Forum, 2009; 26(4): 31-33), the College would like to ask GPs for their views on how best it can assess the needs of GPs in relation to this project.

The ICGP is in the process of consulting with public and patient representative organisations to ascertain the views and priorities of patients and would similarly like to collate opinions from GPs.

- What sort of issues would you like to see the project addressing?
- What procedures do you think are important to facilitate partnerships with patients?

All views and opinions are welcomed and should be sent to Maureen Dempsey at Email: maureen.dempsey@icgp.ie

If you require more detailed information on the project, please contact either Maureen Dempsey, project administrator or Dr Ailis Ní Riain, director of advocacy and professional competence.

College bye-law amendments up for consideration at AGM

The following ICGP bye-law amendments were adopted by Council in March and will be up for consideration at the AGM.

Section 4 – annual subscription
- Par 4.1, delete the words “elected from 1st July 2002”
- Par 4.2 a) – Delete the words “who have been associates as at 30th June 2002, or who have been fully registered for less than 5 years”.
- To read: “to one half the annual subscription for those liable who are working in part time practice available for 3 sessions per week (1 session = 3 hours) or less, excepting those members/associates engaged in the teaching or training of general practice, or the spouse of a member who has paid the full annual subscription and is resident in Ireland”.

- Par 4.2 b – Delete the words “to one quarter of the annual subscription”, “fully retired from active medical practice”. Insert the words “to 10% of the annual subscription”. To read: “to 10% of the annual subscription for those liable who are temporarily retired from active general practice (eg. illness, maternity/paternity or special leave), or those permanently resident outside the Republic of Ireland”.

- Par 4.2 b(i) – Delete the words “medical” and “65”. Insert the words “general”, “or”, “70”. To read: “to zero annual subscription for those fully retired from active general practice and/or having attained the age of 70 years”.

ICGP bye-laws can be reviewed at: www.icgp.ie/aboutus

AGM motions on various issues proposed by faculties

Corrigan Faculty: The Corrigan Faculty would like all fees of the ICGP to be reviewed downward in the context of the current economic crisis facing the medical profession in Ireland.

Kilkenny Faculty: That the ICGP requests that the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOEHLG) and local authorities audit and enforce standards of design construction and management of cycle paths on our roads so as to ensure best practice and to encourage greater utilisation and improved safety for cyclists of all ages.

Merrion Faculty: The Merrion Faculty asks the ICGP to resist the transfer of patients requiring anticoagulation monitoring from secondary to primary care without adequate agreement, backup and resources as this puts patients and doctors at risk.

Wexford Faculty: The Wexford Faculty proposes that the ICGP seeks to advance the concept of ‘Phase 2 Training’ by examining alternative methods of funding, and that the prior appropriate hospital training would be recognised.

Pictured at the 2009 graduation ceremony of the Western Training Programme in General Practice were graduates (l-r): Drs Robert Marsh, Garrett Ryan, Crea Gallagher and Enda Devitt.
Positive feedback from recent practice staff training course

A practice staff training course for existing reception, secretary and administrative staff was held recently at the ICGP. The emphasis of the course is to achieve better management of patient access to practice services and increased support of clinical personnel, resulting in improved overall patient care. The course was much appreciated and received good feedback from participants.

Further information on this course is available on www.mip.ie or by contacting Margaret Cunnane at Email: margaret.cunnane@icgp.ie

Cork GP trainee obtains academic fellowship

The ICGP would like to congratulate Claire Buckley from the Cork General Practice Training Scheme on her success in obtaining one of four fellowships on the National SpR/SR Academic Fellowship Programme.

The fellowship was established by the HSE with the Health Research Board (HRB), the Forum of postgraduate training and the university academic medical departments in working towards implementing one of the key recommendations of the Buttimer report on postgraduate medical education and training (2006). The fellowship will provide a coherent and integrated training and career path for clinical academics.

Following successful completion of the fellowship programme, the trainee will be awarded with a Certificate of Satisfactory Completion of Training and a PhD. As well as ensuring that candidates do not have to postpone or step out of their clinical training in order to complete a PhD, successful fellows will also be able to prepare an ad persona integrated training plan to cover the clinical and research training components rather than working to a prescribed plan. Four fellows have been funded across all training bodies. Claire will be looking at the management of type 2 diabetes in Ireland, as it is increasingly moving to primary care.

The principal hypothesis that will be tested is that a more aggressive approach to pharmacotherapy in patients with diabetes in the primary care setting will result in an improvement in markers of diabetes care and in reported quality of life.