

HCAI AMR Newsletter December 2014

European Antibiotic Awareness Day and the Public Winter Education Campaign

This year, there were two separate national launches.

1. Professional Prescribers Launch

This launch focused on the safe use of antibiotics in both humans and the agrifood sector.

The key message is that keeping antibiotics effective for future generations is everyone's responsibility and each of us needs to recognise our professional responsibility in this area and do our best to help.

President Tony Cox spoke at the professionals launch. (Click [here](#) to listen to his 10-minute talk.) In particular, he urged GPs to think more scientifically about how we prescribe antibiotics and use www.antibioticprescribing.ie to guide the best antibiotic choice for infections seen in Irish general practice. He highlighted the overprescribing in Irish nursing homes and other long-term care facilities (LTCF) relative to Europe seen in the HALT study. Stopping prophylaxis for UTI which accounted for almost 40% of antibiotics prescribed in LTCF would go a long way towards improving this. Click [here](#) for the 2013 National HALT Report.

Dr Cox cautioned us to remember the significant nuisance and toxic side effects from antibiotics and their potential for serious interactions with commonly prescribed medicines, e.g. statins. Also, he reminded us of our professional responsibility: "As general practitioners, we need to advocate for our patients and ensure we are providing best practice. If that means taking steps to avoid writing scripts for antibiotics even though they may be the desired outcome of a patient consultation, then we need to do this. Only through ongoing education, awareness and collaboration across the clinical professions will we succeed in reducing the overuse of antibiotics which is why events like today are so welcome and important."

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Tony Holohan spoke about One Health, a unique feature of the 2014 campaign. This was established by a joint working group between the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to tackle antimicrobial resistance. Each department has announced enhanced arrangements for interdepartmental communication, cooperation and engagement in relation to ensuring a holistic joint national approach to addressing the issue of antibiotic resistance (AMR). This will help to ensure that all healthcare professionals across sectors join forces to combat antibiotic resistance and promote the safe use of antibiotics.

Chief Veterinary Officer Martin Blake outlined the concerns in the agrifood sector and what is being done to help here.

Prof Frank Murray, RCPI President, explained how hospital doctors could use antibiotics better and more safely.

Mr Cathal Kelly, RCSI President, talked about the doctors of the future – our current medical

students – their perception of the problem of AMR and what they can do to make sure that there will be effective antibiotics for the lifespan of their medical careers.

Kathy Maher, IPU president, outlined how pharmacists can both help patients and prevent a need to visit the GP for self-limiting viral infections, and how they can teach patients to take antibiotics correctly once prescribed .

The speeches are available for viewing at the links below:

[Kathy Maher](#), President, Irish Pharmacy Union

[Tony Holohan](#), Chief Medical Officer, DOH

[Martin Blake](#), Chief Veterinary Officer

[Frank Murray](#), President, RCPI

[Tony Cox](#), President, ICGP

[Cathal Kelly](#), President, RCSI

2. Public Education Launch with New Patient Self-Help Website www.undertheweather.ie

Undertheweather.ie was developed by the HSE in partnership with GPs and pharmacists, and offers straightforward advice on how to get through common illnesses without antibiotics.

The website gives sensible practical information, developed by health professionals, on a range of common conditions like colds, flu, earaches, sore throats and tummy bugs. It tells you how long they should last, what to expect, and what you can do to cope with, and recover from, these illnesses. The site includes a series of videos featuring GPs and pharmacists who offer their expertise on dealing with these common illnesses, practical remedies, and advice on when to seek help from either a pharmacist or a doctor.

Research has shown that a lot of people still believe that antibiotics can help to treat common illnesses, like colds, flu, earaches, tummy bugs and rashes. In fact antibiotics are useless against most of these infections, which are caused by viruses, and antibiotics don't work on viruses. Learning how to manage common illnesses with confidence and common sense is a great life skill and improves our understanding of when we need antibiotics and when we don't. It's something that we learn from our parents, friends, doctors, own experience and, more and more, from the internet. Under the Weather has been developed in response to this, to support the public in accessing trusted and reliable health information, developed by the HSE with expert knowledge and advice from GPs and pharmacists.

Undertheweather.ie will be promoted through radio, online advertising including video on demand (pre-roll on TV players) and through social media over the winter months. GP surgeries and community pharmacies will display printed leaflets and posters, as well as stickers for pharmacy doors, to promote the new online information source. The website is mobile, tablet and desktop friendly and will be a useful companion to anyone who's feeling under the weather. After three days, there had been 10,000 hits to the website and it has received a very positive response from the public and professionals.

Dr Nuala O Connor, ICGP Lead HCAI AMR

Useful websites

[Antibiotic use in the community in Ireland](#)

Public information campaign on antibiotics, including campaign materials

www.hse.ie/go/antibiotics

www.undertheweather.ie

Guidelines for antimicrobial prescribing in primary care in Ireland

www.antibioticprescribing.ie