

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Preserving the miracle of antibiotics

November 17-23 is Antibiotics Awareness Week. The week is part of a global initiative to raise awareness around the issue of resistance to antibiotics and to promote responsible use, in order to extend their useful lifespan.

Toowoomba Hospital Infectious Diseases Specialist Dr Kathryn Wilks said a key to maintaining the effectiveness of antibiotics was making sure they were used correctly.

“Antibiotics have been described as one of the great miracles of modern medicine, but unfortunately decades of over-dependence and incorrect usage means resistant bugs are developing rapidly, which will make antibiotics less and less effective” Dr Wilks said.

“Antibiotic resistance is a growing problem globally, but we know by using antibiotics appropriately we can prolong their use.

“Since 2011 we’ve had an Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) program in place at Toowoomba Hospital, and this is recently being expanded to our other facilities across the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS).

“The program revolves around a number of key strategies we can employ to make sure we get the best results when we use antibiotics. Antibiotics are absolutely vital when patients have serious bacterial infections but it is important to investigate for the right diagnosis, then ensure we are prescribing the right antibiotic and at the correct dose.”

Dr Wilks said the problem of increased microbial resistance to antibiotics, and the rise of so-called ‘superbugs’ was compounded by the fact that there is limited research being undertaken into new antibiotics.

“It’s a difficult area because there isn’t any research and development from pharmaceutical companies into the development of new antibiotics,” she said.

“This is because there are pressures to put resources into other types of pharmaceuticals which will offer the companies greater returns.

“On the positive side, just this year the US has pledged to increase funding towards R&D into new antimicrobials, but the fact remains we must still treat the ones we have like a precious resource, because we don’t know when, or even if, alternatives will be developed.”

**Ends**

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