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Are you an antibiotic misuser?

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service (SCHHS) staff are highlighting the global challenge facing Antibiotic Resistance (AMR) during Antibiotic Awareness Week (November 14 – 20).

SCHHS Infectious Diseases Physician Associate Professor Jennifer Broom says it’s very important to raise awareness around bacterial resistance and the decreasing antibiotic options available to treat infections.

“Antibiotic resistance presents a serious global challenge in all sectors where antibiotics are used, including in human health, animal health, agriculture, farming and aquaculture” A/Prof Broom said.

“We need individual, institutional, governmental, national and international change in order to address this critically important issue and to preserve antibiotic options for the future.”

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change to protect themselves from the effects of antibiotics. There is growing global concern over antibiotic resistance, as there has not been any significant discovery of new classes of antibiotics in around 30 years.

“Overuse of antibiotics causing resistance and lack of new antibiotic classes to fill the gaps means that treatment of common infections will be threatened if the current situation does not change,” A/Prof Broom said.

The SCHHS has been proactive in its response, and set up an Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) team, which is called The Antibiotic Guardianship Team (TAG Team). It is doing its bit locally to optimise antibiotic use. The team, based at Nambour General Hospital, is made up of infectious diseases physicians, clinical pharmacists and a clinical nurse.

“Our TAG Team aims to optimise antibiotic use by ensuring patients receive the right drug, at the right dose, via the right route and for the right duration of time,” A/Prof Broom said.

Associate Professor Broom, along with colleagues including Professor Alex Broom at the University of New South Wales, is researching the social drivers behind antibiotic use in the healthcare settings. Research such as this is crucial in understanding how healthcare professions and patients perceive and experience antibiotic use and can provide critical information to changing our prescribing behaviours.

“Patients can ask their doctors whether antibiotics are absolutely necessary for their condition. Doctors need to consider carefully before prescribing antibiotics in any situation.
Nurses and pharmacists have an essential role in collaborating with doctors and patients in antibiotic prescribing decisions and behaviour."

ENDS

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