

CONTAINING ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Comprehensive policy package for healthcare

STAR HEALTH DESK

Antibiotic or antimicrobial resistance is a serious problem that strikes at the core of infectious disease control and has the potential to halt, and possibly even to roll back, progress. While it is a natural response of microbes, resistance can be contained through careful and appropriate antibiotic use.

Western European countries have managed to decrease the rate of antimicrobial resistance in some pathogens through a multipronged approach in comprehensive well regulated health systems. Integrated monitoring of antibiotic consumption and resistance, prescriber and consumer education that is coordinated and paid for by the government, and regulation of use in communities and hospitals have shown that it is possible to contain antimicrobial resistance. Unfortunately, even in well regulated systems, resistance in some pathogens continues to increase unabated and problems remain.

What about the developing countries like Bangladesh — where there is much less monitoring, diagnostics are sparse and comprehensive healthcare is a distant prospect? Fragmented health services, mainly in the profit-driven private sector, make antibiotics an easy target



for misuse and abuse.

There is sufficient scientific knowledge about appropriate antibiotic use. Specific antibiotics are effective only against certain organisms, must be taken in a particular dose for a specified duration, and they are ineffective against viral infections. There is the fallacy that all infections respond to antibiotics. Many patients with a viral respiratory tract infection feel better after taking antibiotics Amoxicillin. This is usually due to the natural course of the illness and not to the Amoxicillin (they may think that the antibiotic's side-effect of diarrhoea is actually a symptom of the illness). Mothers feel safer giving children antibiotics rather than steam inhalations and Paracetamol.

Physicians prescribe antibiotics for simple viral infections in otherwise healthy patients to prevent possible secondary bacterial infections, despite good clinical trials showing no value of such prophylaxis. Quakes readily dispense antibiotics without prescription as their income depends on sales rather than on a professional fee or salary. Pharmaceutical companies may promote sales of antibiotics independent of patient need. Finally, most antibiotics, by virtue of their safety and short courses, lend themselves to abuse; patients often take antibiotics of their own accord, whereas few people would take antihypertensive medications on their own.

Combating these behaviours in the

settings with poor healthcare system, limited regulation and inadequate health education is a big challenge. Repeated calls for better regulation of medicine must not obstruct appropriate access; antibiotic use will continue to grow in low- and middle-income countries to meet under-served needs. Such increased use must be tied to rational use. Improved drug access without significant improvements in appropriate use will have dire consequences, with continued emergence of "superbugs" and untreatable infections. Improvements in the appropriate use of antibiotics generally reduce health costs as the majority of antibiotic use in most communities is unnecessary.

Containing antimicrobial resistance is the theme of World Health Day 2011. The World Health Organisation is developing a comprehensive policy package for health ministries addressing nearly all stakeholders. This should be an opportunity to launch sustainable action to contain resistance, raise awareness and educate target people using electronic media. Alongside it will help to track and contain spread of resistance with improved informatics and better clinical decision support bedsides diagnostics.

Source: World Health Organisation

Reducing health expenditure by tobacco control

IQBAL MASUD

Tobacco use is a major preventable cause of premature death and disease all over the world. In Bangladesh it is consumed at high level both in smoking form such as cigarette, bidi, hukkah and smokeless form such as zarda, sada pata, gul etc.

According to The Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS), 23.0 percent of adult men and women (aged 15 years or above) in Bangladesh currently smoke tobacco. The estimated number of current adult tobacco smokers is 21.9 million (21.2 million males and 0.7 million females). A 2004 World Health Organisation (WHO) study observed that 57,000 person's deaths and 382,000 disabilities were attributable to tobacco use in Bangladesh.

In order to reduce the tobacco use various national and international initiatives have been undertaken. Recently the Fourth Session of the FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP-4) was concluded at



Punta Del Este, Uruguay. The meeting accomplished major achievements in public health in the face of unprecedented efforts by the tobacco industry to block progress in reducing the millions of lives lost annually due to tobacco-related diseases.

The COP-4 also voted to create a working group that will draft Guidelines on tobacco taxation. Tobacco tax increases are the single most effective short-term measure to reduce tobacco consumption, but are often blocked by lack of aware-

ness in finance ministries of the added revenue (and public health gains) to be made.

Other important developments during the COP-4 included a decision to continue negotiations on an illicit trade protocol and to initiate work on supporting Parties to deal with liability as well as improvements to the FCTC reporting system.

Bangladesh is one of those countries where both production and consumption of tobacco are high, and it is overburdened with tobacco-related illnesses. Tobacco control can reduce non-communicable diseases and premature deaths significantly. Such control can reduced health expenditure also.

As Bangladesh has been experiencing numerous problems in providing proper health services, tobacco control could help reduced vulnerability of people to various diseases.

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4th nationwide breast cancer screening programme by CCPR

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Centre for Cancer Prevention and Research (CCPR) has organised nationwide breast cancer awareness and free screening programme, as a continuation of their last three years effort to raise awareness and detecting the cancer at early stage, says a press release.

The programme is scheduled to start on January 14 initially at Dhaka and nearby districts which is to spread gradually in other districts.

The programme will be marked with seminars as well as screening camps, especially focused for the vulnerable women, with special emphasis to the deprived and low socioeconomic class.

Nokia, one of the leading mobile phone manufacturing companies, has extended support to this programme as a part of their corporate social responsibility.

Mosarrat Jahan Talukder, Executive Director of CCPR informed that approximately a total of 23000 women participated in the awareness seminars and about 4500 women were examined clinically under this programme since 2007. About 1000 women communicated subsequently to CCPR for further investigations, treatment, follow-up and counseling. Dr Md Habibullah Talukder, Associate Professor and Head of Cancer Epidemiology, National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital will lead the technical team.

HEALTH TIPS

6 ways to reduce liver cancer risk

STAR HEALTH DESK

Millions of people are living with chronic liver disease in Bangladesh. While a cure is beyond the reach of many affected individuals, most can still live a normal life by preventing their disease from advancing.

Regardless of the cause, there is a goal uniting everyone affected with chronic liver disease — to prevent the illness from progressing. If liver disease progresses to its most severe stage, then the implications are typically serious. Experts advise following lifestyle approaches to reduce the likelihood of developing liver cancer.

1. Treat alcohol as your enemy: While some conservative sources suggest reducing alcohol consumption with liver disease, there is enough evidence to support the effort to avoid it at all costs. Drinking alcoholic beverages will put anyone already managing liver disease on a path towards cirrhosis and/or liver cancer.

2. Exercise: Besides preventing weight gain, research shows that physical activity keeps hormone levels balanced, which is important because high levels of certain hormones increases cancer risk. Most experts suggest physical activity for a minimum of 30 minutes each day.

3. Skip processed meat: When meat is preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by the addition of preservatives, cancer-causing substances (carcinogens) are formed that damage cells in the body.

4. Hepatitis B immunisation: If not already vaccinated, get immunised against Hepatitis B. Infection with Hepatitis B increases your risk of developing cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma.

5. Quit smoking: Although quitting smoking has been described as harder than quitting heroin, it is a necessity to prevent the development of cancer. Cigarette smoke contains many known carcinogens.

6. Eat fruit and veggies: The evidence demonstrating that fruit and vegetables are nature's prevention for cancer is abundant. The American Cancer Society recommends eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day to help prevent cancer.



Malaria treatment

Once a diagnosis of malaria is established, the patient should be treated early with a safe and effective antimalarial medicine. Effective treatment should be started within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms, to avoid progression to severe malaria which is associated with a high case fatality rate.

Vector control is the primary public health intervention for reducing malaria transmission at the community level. It is the only intervention that can reduce malaria transmission from very high levels to close to zero.

In high transmission areas, it can reduce child mortality rates and the prevalence of severe anaemia. For individuals personal protection against mosquito bites represents the first line of defence for malaria prevention.

Knowing for better living

In the hospitals of Bangladesh ...

Cardiovascular disease

is the **No.1** cause of death !

Check your blood pressure regularly

Check your diabetes regularly

Control your body weight

Avoid smoking

Exercise regularly

Consult your Doctor



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