

Antibiotic misuse raises risk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Antibiotic misuse reduces sensitivity of the drugs against various diseases leaving people more vulnerable, experts told a seminar yesterday.

They said various critical drugs, which were highly effective few years' back, are not working against infections now.

The seminar on antimicrobial resistance was organised at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) in the city yesterday.

BSMMU pharmacology department in collaboration with ICDDR, B and World Health Organisation (WHO) organised the seminar to mark the World Health Day.

Studies show that antibiotics like Cefpodoxime and Ceftriaxone are used widely for treating ARI, as Azithromycin, Amoxycillin, and Ampicillin do not work effectively against ARI in Bangladesh.

Similarly the effectiveness of Ciprofloxacin against cholera has been reduced to 44 percent in 2009 from 93 percent in 1993.

Stressing the need for the rational use of antibiotics, the experts said forming national alliances and comprehensive strategy are important to stop microbial resistance.

BSMMU Vice Chancellor Prof Pran Gopal Datta; Prof Khondaker M Shefeytullah, director general of the directorate general of health services; and ICDDR, B scientist Wasif Ali Khan spoke at the seminar among others.



Bus drivers stop their vehicles in front of Sonargaon crossing in the city flouting traffic rules. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Protect Kornapara Khal: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to stop construction of a culvert on Kornapara Khal (canal) at Savar and its steps for protecting the canal from pollution and damage.

In response to a writ petition, the court also ordered the authorities to submit a list of the mills and factories which are polluting the canal, and a report within eight weeks on how much damage to the canal has already been made.

An HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Md Nuruzzaman issued a rule upon the government to explain within eight weeks why it should not be directed to take appropriate steps to protect the canal.

The order and rule came up following the petition filed as public interest litigation by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association stating that Kornapara Khal is being damaged due to pollution by some factories and encroachments.

HSC EXAMS 62 expelled on 2nd day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-two examinees were expelled from different centres for adopting unfair means on the second day of Higher Secondary Certificate and its equivalent examinations while 7,035 candidates remained absent yesterday.

The Bangla second paper examination was held yesterday under 10 education boards.

Among the expelled students, 46 were from Bangladesh Technical Education Board while seven from Madrasa board; two each from Chittagong and Jessore boards; and one each from Rajshahi, Comilla, Dinajpur, Barisal and Sylhet boards, according to the education ministry control room.

The highest number of absentees 2,023 yesterday was from Dhaka Board.

The next examination on English first paper will be held on Sunday.

Antibiotics being used indiscriminately

Say experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Antibiotics have turned ineffective against various diseases, as the critical drugs are being prescribed and sold indiscriminately.

Experts quote different local studies as saying that because of misuse, most people have developed 40 to 100 percent resistance to the commonly used antibiotics.

Gram-positive microorganisms have become 40 percent resistant to Azithromycin, one of the most commonly used antibiotics, says Prof AK Azad Chowdhury of clinical pharmacy and pharmacology department, Dhaka University (DU).

Prof Azad quoted the data from a study titled "Antibiotic prescription pattern in district hospitals in Bangladesh." DU in collaboration with University of Nottingham, UK conducted it from July to December 2009 at six district hospitals.

Ciprofloxacin, the most commonly prescribed second-generation drug that worked effec-

tively against E Coli and gram-negative microorganisms, now encounters resistance in 78 percent cases.

So the patients, to cure the infections, now are depending on Levofloxacin, a third generation antibiotic, reveals the study.

Ciprofloxacin is the only antibiotic currently recommended by World Health Organisation (WHO) for the management of diarrhoea due to Shigella organisms.

But rapidly increasing prevalence of resistance to ciprofloxacin is reducing the options for safe and efficacious treatment of shigellosis, particularly for children. New antibiotics suitable for oral use are badly needed, according to the WHO website.

Resistance has also been developed against Amoxicillin and Ampicillin in the country, which is still commonly prescribed in the UK for treating infections. Against Erythromycin, another antibiotic, resistance is now 100 percent.

After few years it would be diffi-

cult to treat the patients, as no antibiotic would work then, said Prof Azad.

He suggested formulation of antimicrobial policy so that the government monitors that doctors prescribe antibiotics after confirming that the patient needs them, and medicine stores sell antibiotics only after receiving prescriptions from the buyers.

Selling the antibiotics without prescription is strictly prohibited in almost all the developed countries considering the risk of the drugs' being antimicrobial resistance.

But as there is no policy and standard practice in the country, all the drug shops are selling antibiotic without bothering to see the doctors' prescription. Doctors also often arbitrarily prescribe antibiotic without confirmation.

While selling Azithromycin without any prescription, Bulbul Ahmed, a salesman of Friends Pharma at the city's Green road, said he does not know anything about this standard

practice.

"It is the narcotic drugs, for which we seek doctors' prescription," he said, adding that if they seek prescription from the customers for selling antibiotics, their sale will be dropped significantly.

On the other hand, as the patients are easily getting the antibiotics, they do not bother to finish the course of antibiotics properly and often stop taking antibiotic halfway whenever they feel better.

All these facts actually cause insensitivity and inefficiency of the antibiotics on different microorganisms and finally increases duration to cure the disease, treatment cost, and dissatisfaction among the patients, say experts.

Antimicrobial resistance is now a global problem as 50 percent of antibiotics are prescribed irrationally across the globe and of these 50 percent is wrongly used. About 440,000 new cases of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) emerge annually, causing at least 150,000 deaths.

PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PEOPLE Separate census demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Alliance of Disabled People's Organisations (NADPO) yesterday demanded an independent national census of the physically challenged people in the country.

They said the fifth national census that ended in March 19 would not give an accurate picture on the number of people with different forms of physical challenges in Bangladesh.

Therefore, a separate census needs to be conducted to get a correct statistic on this.

The demand came at a press conference organised by NADPO at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

"Neither the census officials went to every household, nor did they enquire whether the households have any family member with any form of disability," said NADPO President Abdus Sattar Dulal.

While some households were asked the question, their types of disability were not taken into account, he said.

The census form had six columns of question on physically challenged people, and in many cases, the questions remained unanswered, he added.

"Therefore, a big opportunity to get a picture of the physically challenged population has been lost," said Abdus Sattar, demanding an independent census on this.

He said the fifth national census might even be less informative on the physically challenged than the fourth census conducted in 1991.

Speakers said an accurate statistics of this population is important for planning development activities for them.

"Without a precise idea on this figure, it would be difficult to come up with plans and policies to develop them and help them to contribute in the national economy," said the NADPO President.

At current, more than 10 percent of the total Bangladesh population are physically challenged, said NADPO officials.

The number may be startling as most physically challenged are rarely seen outdoors since the country's cities and transportation facilities are not friendly to them, they said.

Clarification

In response to the report headlined "Plan to restrict tobacco farming" and published in The Daily Star on March 31, Shawkat Momen Shahjahan, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on Agriculture Ministry, sent a clarification. Shahjahan in his statement claimed that he was quoted as saying, "The government will impose restriction on tobacco cultivation to minimise its negative impact on environment and public health." But he had actually said, "The government is discouraging tobacco cultivation, and it will be managed in a responsible manner."

UN to consider peacekeeping training school in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UN police chief Ann-Marie Orlor yesterday said her organisation would consider a Bangladesh government's proposal for setting up a regional UN Peacekeeping Training School in the country.

She made the assurance during her courtesy call on State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku at his ministry office.

Police sources said if the school is established, the county will benefited financially as the UN will provide monetary support for it.

Tuku said though Bangladesh is the topmost peacekeeper contributing

country for the last couple of years, it has no representation at the higher level like the posts of deputy inspector general, additional inspector general or police commissioner at the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

The minister proposed the UN police chief for recruiting such higher-level police officers for the mission.

He informed that the UN police chief appreciated the contribution of Bangladeshi police to the UN peacekeeping mission and assured of taking steps for appointing higher ranked police officials for the mission.

Talking about the Bangladeshi police in war-torn Ivory Coast, the

minister said they will take steps to send the cops back to the country if the situation deteriorates.

Replying to a question, he said all police personnel are unhurt in Ivory Coast and they are keeping regular contact.

He said the geographical location of Bangladesh is very important. If a regional peacekeepers' training school is set up here, UNPOL and FPU members from home and abroad will be benefited.

The state minister said now a total of 2,066 police personnel are deployed at 11 missions. Of them 153 are female. He added so far 7,279 police personnel have served the mission.

Commerce minister sued for defamation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A local journalist lodged a defamation case against Commerce Minister Faruk Khan with a Bogra court yesterday.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Anwarul Haque fixed April 10 for hearing after local journalist Md Suman Sardar filed the case with Chief Judicial Magistrate's court.

Md Suman Sardar works for CNS News, a news agency, as Rajshahi divisional correspondent, reports our correspondent from Bogra.

The plaintiff in his complaint said Faruk Khan termed the journalists corrupt and extortionist at a meeting at his ministry office in the city on April 5.

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