

# Successful strategies to safeguard medications

STAR HEALTH DESK

Over several decades, powerful medicines have been developed to treat diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS, influenza and many bacterial infections; all medicines used to treat these infections are likely become ineffective because of resistance at some point. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has evolved to become a worldwide health threat. Of critical importance, every antibiotic ever developed is at risk. With a dearth of new antibiotics coming to market, the need for action to avert a developing global crisis in health care is increasingly urgent.

Unnecessary and inappropriate use of antibiotics favours the emergence and spread of resistant bacteria. A crisis has been building up over decades. AMR makes it difficult and more expensive to treat many common infections, causing delays in effective treatment or, in worst cases, inability to provide treatment at all.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has long recognised AMR as a growing



global health threat, and published a book entitled "The evolving threat of antimicrobial resistance — Options for action" describes examples of actions taken to slow down drug resistance and preserve the ability of medicine to effectively treat many infectious diseases. Experts in that book provide certain recommendation to safeguard medicine. This includes prescribing antibiotics appropriately and only when needed, following treatment correctly, restricting the use of antibiotics in food production to therapeutic

purposes and tackling the problem of substandard and counterfeit medicines.

Some of the examples of a number of successful strategies and measures highlighted in the book include:

- In Thailand, the "Antibiotic Smart Use" programme reduces the prescribing of and demanding for antibiotics by both prescribers and patients. It showed an 18–46% reduction in antibiotic use while 97% of targeted patients recovered or improved regardless whether they had taken antibiotics.

- A programme in pharmacies in Viet Nam consisting of inspection for prescription-only drugs; education on pharmacy treatment guidelines; and group meetings of pharmacy staff resulted in a significant reduction in antibiotic dispensing for acute respiratory infections.

- In Norway, the introduction of effective vaccines in farmed salmon and trout together with improved fish health management reduced the annual use of antimicrobials in farmed fish by 98 per cent between 1987 and 2004.

- In 2010, the University of Zambia School of Medicine revised their undergraduate medical curriculum. The topics of AMR and rational use of medicines were inserted prominently. The aim is that graduates enter clinical practice with the right skills and attitudes to be both effective practitioners and committed stewards of AMR containment.

It is the high time to take much stronger action to safeguard medication. Otherwise, perilous post-antibiotic era is waiting for us.

Source: World Health Organisation

## GUIDELINE UPDATE

### Pap tests needed only every 3 years

Women need getting a Pap test — which detects cervical cancer — only once every three years, and do not need to be screened until age 21, even if they are sexually active earlier, according to new guidelines from a U.S. health panel.

In the previous guideline, the recommending screening was "at least every three years," — a weak language, which left the door open for annual tests. The worry about frequent Pap smear screening is that tests can result in a large number of false positives that lead to sometimes painful biopsies and put women at risk for pregnancy complications in the future, like pre-term labour and low-birth-weight infants.

Once they hit 30, women also have the option of getting screened once every five years if they choose to do Pap tests together with human papillomavirus (HPV) testing every time, the committees agreed. Women under 30 should not be tested for HPV because the sexually transmitted infection is common in young people and often goes away on its own, without increasing the cancer risk. Until there is more long-term data on women who have been vaccinated against HPV, they should continue getting normal screening, according to the report.

The recommendation to test every three or five years is based on evidence that cervical cancer is relatively slow-growing. So it is very unlikely a woman would develop advanced cancer in the few years after a negative screening.

Source: Annals of Internal Medicine

## HEALTH *bulletin*

### Aerobics may ease menopause symptoms: study

In a small study on Finnish women who had recently entered menopause, those who stuck to an aerobic exercise programme for six months were less likely to report menopause symptoms like night sweats, hot flashes, mood swings and irritability than women who did not exercise.

The study's authors say their results suggest exercise could serve as an alternative to hormone replacement therapy for quelling bothersome menopause symptoms.

Source: Menopause



### More red meat, more mortality!

Eating red meat is associated with a sharply increased risk of death from cancer and heart disease, according to a new study. The more of it you eat, the greater the risk.

Researchers found that each daily increase of 3 ounces of red meat was associated with a 12% greater risk of dying over all, including a 16% greater risk of cardiovascular death and a 10% greater risk of cancer death.

Source: Archives of Internal Medicine

## Helping children with hearing impairment

Technological development alone will not teach the child to listen and to speak; there is need for the child to be in



STAR HEALTH REPORT

Some children are born deaf. But with advancement of technology, children with hearing impairment can now hear and learn to listen and talk.

It is estimated that 3-4 out of every 1,000 children born who have some degree of hearing impairment. It is crucial that infants with hearing impairment are identified before 3 months and upon detection be entered into an early intervention programme.

Unlike Singapore, a country like Bangladesh does not have universal newborn hearing screening programmes whereby each child born is screened soon after birth, using objective tests.

There are three hospitals in Singapore involved in the Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening programme including Singapore General Hospital (SGH).

Critical language learning years are from birth to six years of age. The earlier infants are detected

with hearing loss, the better the outcomes will be. As a result, there will be diminishing effects of the hearing loss on speech and language development.

At SGH, such help is available to children with hearing impairment and their families. They are entered into the Listen & Talk programme, which specialises in the auditory-verbal approach. Families are guided and supported as they work to create a listening and language learning environment in their homes. Parents become skilled in integrating language learning in daily interaction with their children.

Depending on the hearing impairment of the child, hearing aid or cochlear implant may be suitable option for the baby.

However, technological development alone will not teach the child to listen and to speak. There is need for the child to be in an effective habilitation programme, where s/he learns to listen and integrate newly acquired sounds. The child

and the family attend weekly auditory-verbal therapy (AVT) session in order for the child to learn to listen and make meaning of what s/he is hearing.

"This type of programme is very crucial in addition to any intervention to overcome hearing impairment," said Dr Low Wong Kein, Director, Listen & Talk Programme at Singapore General Hospital.

"Parents are essential partners and their participation is vital in the child's habilitation," he added.

Although some hearing impaired children would benefit from the services of the special schools, the primary goal should be helping them become successful in the mainstream educational setting. This can be done in programmes in collaboration with school teachers, which is going on in Singapore.

The deaf children can be enabled with effective intervention and will remain no longer disabled. They can also live a meaningful productive life and grow up like any other normal child.



### DID YOU KNOW?

## Ultrasound increases diagnostic accuracy in breast cancer

DR MD GULAM MOSTAFA

Digital mammography (kind of X-ray) is the gold standard for detection of breast cancer. Only mammography can detect 42% of breast cancer, but when ultrasound is added, diagnostic accuracy is increased up to 78%.

Small invasive cancer without any metastasis (spread) can be detected by ultrasound easily — that is the best target in breast cancer screening. Dense breast (more glandular tissue than fat) is prone to develop cancer more than non-dense one. Ultrasound has the high rate of accuracy in detecting the fat-glandular tissue density in the breast.

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## Knowing for better living

### In Bangladesh . . .

Incidence of premature birth & congenital birth defects are increasing day by day !

Ensure adequate nutrition for pregnant mother

Keep away pregnant mother from stressful situation

Ensure adequate rest for pregnant mother

Avoid smoking & exposure to smoke

Keep away pregnant mother from infection

Avoid conception before 18 & above 40 years of age

Consult your Doctor



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