



## CPME/AD/Brd/130609/129 final/EN

At the CPME Board Meeting in Brussels on 13 June 2009, CPME adopted the following document “**Antibiotic resistance: CPME position paper**” (CPME 2009/129 final EN/Fr)” (referring to CPME 2009/129 EN/Fr)

### Antibiotic resistance: CPME position paper

#### The war against superbugs

The New England Journal of Medicine recently published a paper which surveyed the challenges presented to clinicians by antibiotic resistant superbugs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. The authors found that science had come full circle and “arrived at a point as frightening as the preantibiotic era: for patients infected with multi drug-resistant bacteria, there is no magic bullet”. Indeed the resistance of superbugs such as Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), enterococci, and *E.faecium* infections has increased significantly in recent years. Whilst several compounds have been developed to treat gram-positive infections, doubts remain as to their efficacy.

The NEJM also reported that the situation was even worse for noscomial gram-negative infections. No new antibiotics were currently in the later stages of clinical development for this group of multi-drug resistant organisms. Concerns have been heightened by the fact that some gram-negative organisms have been found in otherwise healthy patients outside hospitals, e.g. urinary tract infections caused by *E.coli*, and recent outbreaks of food poisoning caused by salmonella.

Overall, it is now more difficult than ever to eradicate infections caused by antibiotic-resistant superbugs. With the pipeline for new antimicrobials running dry, 21<sup>st</sup> century clinicians may have to revisit compounds developed decades ago and abandoned because of toxicity - or test all remaining options and use what seems active. Above all, academic researchers, industry and government must make a concerted effort to overcome this threat. The outcome will have global consequences for decades to come.

#### A new role for patients, doctors and governments

Tackling the global threat of ‘superbugs’ through high-level research and development is half of the battle. More than ever, it is vital that existing antibiotics are used responsibly and correctly, so as to help prolong the effectiveness of these drugs. National governments have a vital role in getting this message across to patients. The UK Department of Health (DH) has already taken a major step in this direction. In 2008, and again in 2009, the DH ran an antibiotic campaign which reminded the public that antibiotics do not help to treat viral infections such as colds, most coughs or sore throats. It also highlighted the fact that inappropriate use of antibiotics will increase



resistance to them and make it more difficult to treat serious bacterial infections (such as superbugs) in the future.

Europe has also given a higher profile to this issue. November 2008 saw the first-ever European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD), which was celebrated in the 27 EU Member States. EAAD has been conceived as an annual event which will raise awareness on how to use antibiotics in a responsible way that will help keep them effective also in the future. Along with urging patients to follow their doctors' instructions on the correct use of antibiotics, it called upon doctors themselves to discuss with their patients about the importance of not over-using antibiotics and taking them correctly when prescribed. Doctors could also help to raise awareness by displaying the EAAD campaign poster in their waiting rooms.

#### A role for the CPME

The EAAD campaign and national initiatives which support it are to be commended. It is important, however, that the profile of this issue is sustained throughout the year, and not merely restricted to a single day in November. The CPME can play a crucial role in this respect, both through the individual efforts of CPME member organisations and national governments in their home countries, and through the adoption of the following recommendations.

#### Policy recommendations

The CPME is deeply concerned at recent research which demonstrates that growth in microbial resistance to antibiotics and:

*Recommendation 1: Calls upon academics researchers, industry and national governments to renew and increase their efforts to tackle the threat of antibiotic-resistant 'superbugs'.*

*Recommendation 2: Recognises that taking antibiotics for the wrong reasons or incorrectly causes bacteria to develop resistance against antibiotic treatments with a risk of rendering antibiotics ineffective in the future. It therefore calls on EU governments to disseminate information on how to use antibiotics responsibly as this will help maintain their effectiveness.*

*Recommendation 3: Calls upon doctors, nurses and other health professionals to play an active part in getting this message across to the public.*

*Recommendation 4: Calls upon EU governments and health professionals to support the annual European Antibiotic Awareness Day as a means of focusing attention on this important issue.*

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1. Arias CA, Murray BE, 'Antibiotic-Resistant Bugs in the 21st Century – A Clinical Super-Challenge.' *NEJM* 360;5, 437-443