

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Antibiotic Resistance: A Growing Menace

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Dear Editor,

I read with interest two articles titled "Rational Use of Antibiotics in Surgical Practice" by Khan MI and "Antibiotic resistance: a real menace" by Devaraj NK (1,2). The former article focused on the use of antibiotics in the surgical field including use as prophylaxis or therapeutic agent and measures to minimise the phenomenon of antibiotic resistance. The latter article meanwhile focused on the real Malaysian and worldwide data regarding this worrying phenomenon and measures that can be taken such as involving the public and policymakers as well as incorporation of this subject in medical school curriculum. Indeed, the authors were right to point out that the use of antibiotics should be judicious in all branches of medicine to prevent emergence of this new major and deadly health problem, i.e. antibiotic resistance.

Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, USA has termed this menace as a real health threat. In USA alone it kills about 23,000 people a year (3). At the other end in Asia, the increasing threat of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), macrolide-resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, and multidrug-resistant gut organisms are indeed very worrying. To add to the misery, is that there are limited options to treat these deadly pathogens (4).

No single party can be blamed for this problem that is reaching an epidemic proportion. It is important to now seek a practical solution to end this menace. Besides steps taken by World Health Organisation (WHO) to minimize the resistance rate of antibiotics, other steps include educating patients that they need to finish the course of antibiotics when prescribed and not to insist on antibiotics if it is not indicated such as for common non-bacterial ailments (5).

Patients most at risk of antibiotic resistance are those who are immunocompromised such as patients who are recipients of organ transplantation, admitted in intensive care units and with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. By taking the steps as mentioned in the article by Khan MI and Devaraj NK, it is hope that we will be able to ensure that the public generally and those immunocompromised will not again be the innocent victims of these deadly pathogens. On a positive note, hope remains to combat this menace. Steps taken by The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in England through its "UK 5 Year Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2013 to 2018" have shown that concerted national effort can help in reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescription with the total prescribing of antibiotics in all settings, measured using defined daily dose (DDD) per day, reducing by 4.5% during this period.

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