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New Zealand raises awareness on usage of antimicrobial medicines

November 18, 2020 | News

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The Ministry of Health is supporting World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (18 – 24 November 2020) by helping health professionals educate New Zealanders about the use of antimicrobial medicines.

The World Health Organization says antimicrobial resistance is one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and the environment, and it can result in superbugs becoming more of a threat.

Antimicrobial medicines include antibacterials, anti-virals, antiseptics, anti-fungals and anti-parasitic medicines. These become less effective when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites become resistant to key antimicrobials, making common infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

Ministry of Health Chief Science Advisor Dr Ian Town says that even with COVID-19 as the overriding health priority in New Zealand, health professionals around the country recognise the threat posed by antibiotic resistance, and are working together to raise awareness.

The Ministry is supporting a sector-wide initiative led by Antimicrobial Stewardship Pharmacists to raise awareness about antimicrobial use, and encouraging prescribers to document their use of antimicrobial medicines.

The initiative is also being supported by all district health boards, PHARMAC, Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand, Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand, New Zealand Hospital Pharmacists Association, ACC, Health Quality and Safety Commission, Ministry for Primary Industries and Best Practice Advocacy Centre New Zealand.