

ANTIBIOTICS AND RESISTANT INFECTIONS

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Recently a lot has been written and seen in the media regarding antibiotic over-utilization and resistant organisms. First a few statistics. Drug-resistant infections claim approximately 700,000 lives a year worldwide. With the advent of antibiotics over one hundred years ago, hundreds of thousands of lives have been saved with appropriate antibiotic use. However, over the past 30 years more and more physicians and patients have utilized antibiotic treatment aggressively. There are many factors involved including, pharmaceutical marketing, patient expectations, physician shortened appointment time, and increasing antibiotic choices.

One of the pressures physicians encounter, on a daily basis, is less time with patients. As the appointment time shortens, it becomes harder to diagnose a condition. When a patient has an infection, it is much easier to start treatment helping with short term results, not factoring the long-term ramifications of antibiotic use. Through evolution, bacteria have learned how to combat various antibiotics. When a particular antibiotic is utilized, thousands of times across the country, we start to see antibiotic resistance.



Now we have antibiotic-resistant bacteria that create a much harder infection to treat, and sometimes cannot be treated with any antibiotic. This increases the overall mortality rate of bacteria related infections.

So what can we do about this very concerning problem? First, education for healthcare providers and the general public that the problem exists. Next, reduce antibiotic overutilization, and lastly encourage diagnostic testing to help guide treatments.

The seniors Hansa Medical Groupe cares for are often the most vulnerable to simple colds turning into pneumonia or worse. Prescribing an antibiotic early sounds like an appropriate treatment choice to help prevent complications related to infections. However, using antibiotics for bacteria in a case of a viral infection does not help treat and instead allows bacteria to learn how to resist that same antibiotic when used in the future. Taking extra time with our patients to try and obtain a diagnosis helps tailor the treatment.

The next time you have cold or flu-like symptoms and you go to the urgent care clinic or your primary care physician, ask questions before taking that antibiotic prescription. There are situations where antibiotic treatment of an infection is appropriate, but it is clear with the advent of resistant organisms or “superbugs” that antibiotics are overutilized.

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