Public Health England

NHS

Patient Safety Alert

Stage Two: Resources

Addressing antimicrobial resistance through implementation of an antimicrobial stewardship programme

18 August 2015

Alert reference number:	NHS/PSA/Re/2015/007
Alert stage:	Two - Resources

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has risen alarmingly over the last 40 years and inappropriate use of antimicrobials is a key driver[1]. From 2010 to 2013, total antibiotic prescribing in England increased by 6%, comprised of a 4% rise in general practice and a 12% increase in hospital inpatient prescribing[2].

The consequences of AMR include increased treatment failure for common infections and decreased treatment options where antibiotics are vital, such as during certain cancer treatments[3]. Antimicrobial stewardship is key to combating AMR and is an important element of the UK Five Year Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy[4].

Antimicrobial stewardship embodies an organisational and system-wide approach to promoting and monitoring the judicious use of antimicrobials by:
- optimising therapy for individual patients;
- preventing overuse and misuse; and
- minimising the development of resistance at patient and community levels.

This alert has been jointly issued by Health Education England, NHS England and Public Health England (PHE) to highlight the challenge of AMR and to signpost the toolkits developed by PHE to support the NHS in improving antimicrobial stewardship in both primary and secondary care.

Primary care resource (including out-of-hours, urgent care centres and walk-in centres)
- TARGET (Treat Antibiotics Responsibly, Guidance, Education, Tools) (http://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/target-antibiotics-toolkit.aspx) is designed to be used by the whole primary care team within the GP practice or out-of-hours setting, as well as being relevant to mental health care settings. The toolkit aims to help influence prescribers' and patients' attitudes, beliefs and perceived barriers to optimal antibiotic prescribing.

Secondary care resource
- Start Smart then Focus (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/antimicrobial-stewardship-start-smart-then-focus) provides an outline of evidence-based antimicrobial stewardship practice for use in secondary care settings. The toolkit provides information on strategies to improve antibiotic use within secondary care as well as suggested audits to improve practice.

The actions in this alert will also support the current national work on sepsis to ensure both appropriate antibiotic prescribing and review (https://www.england.nhs.uk/2014/09/02/psa-sepsis/).

These toolkits should be read alongside, ''Clostridium difficile: how to deal with the problem"[5], "Clostridium difficile infection: risk with broad-spectrum antibiotics"[6], and the recently published "Antimicrobial stewardship: systems and processes for effective antimicrobial medicine use"[7].

It is proposed that antimicrobial stewardship management teams/committees, or equivalent, use evidence of implementation of the recommendations in these resources to demonstrate compliance with the Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections[9].

Actions

Who: All organisations providing NHS funded care where antibiotics are prescribed, dispensed or administered

When: To commence immediately and be completed by 31 March 2016

1 Bring this Alert to the attention of those holding leadership roles for antimicrobial stewardship in your organisation (e.g. Directors of Infection Prevention in acute and ambulance trusts, Heads of Medicines Optimisation in acute and mental health trusts, lead GPs and lead pharmacists in primary care).

2 Review the resources signposted in this Alert and through linking with organisational or cross-system antimicrobial stewardship teams/committees, or equivalent, identify how the resources can be used to support your local antimicrobial stewardship programme.

3 By either circulating this Alert or through local alternatives (such as newsletters, local awareness campaigns etc.) ensure that staff are aware of the key antimicrobial stewardship messages and resources relevant to their clinical practice.

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Technical notes

References

1. Start Smart - Then Focus. Antimicrobial Stewardship Toolkit for English Hospitals (2015); https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/antimicrobial-stewardship-start-smart-then-focus
2. English surveillance programme for antimicrobial utilisation and resistance (ESPAUR) (2014); https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-surveillance-programme-antimicrobial-utilisation-and-resistance-espaur-report
3. Davies S. Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer 2011: Volume Two. Infections and the Rise of Antimicrobial Resistance (2013). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officer-annual-report-volume-2
4. UK Five Year Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2013 to 2018; (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-antimicrobial-resistance-strategy-2013-to-2018
5. *Clostridium difficile* infection: How to deal with the problem (2008, updated 2013); https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clostridium-difficile-infection-how-to-deal-with-the-problem
6. *Clostridium difficile* infection: risk with broad-spectrum antibiotics (2015); https://www.nice.org.uk/advice/esmpb1
7. Antimicrobial stewardship: systems and processes for effective antimicrobial medicine use NG15 (2015); http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng15
8. TARGET Antibiotic toolkit (2012) http://www.rcgp.org.uk/targetantibiotics/
9. The Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections and related guidance (2008, updated 2015) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-health-and-social-care-act-2008-code-of-practice-on-the-prevention-and-control-of-infections-and-related-guidance

Stakeholder engagement

This alert was was developed with advice from the following, who fully support its publication:

• Medical Specialties Patient Safety Expert Group
• Surgical Services Patient Safety Expert Group
• Primary Care Patient Safety Expert Group
• Patient Safety Steering Group

For details of the membership of Patient Safety Expert Groups see http://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/patientsafety/patient-safety-groups/