

News, Good News from Spain!

October 19, 2006 the Spanish Ministry of Health, started a national campaign in order to stop the misuse of antibiotics in Spain. The slogan: "Keep antibiotics working: do not misuse them". The Spanish Minister of Health, Elena Salgado, said "It is a big problem of public health in Spain. The misuse of antibiotics on viral infections, the high antibiotic resistance and the important amount of antibiotics acquired at the pharmacy offices as self medication (about 30%), are the cause of this campaign", the most important one in the last years, with a total cost of 6.4 million euros, and directed to both health related professionals and to the general public.

Posters and advertising messages with the slogan "Keep antibiotic working: do not misuse them" with two different patterns one directed to adults and the other to children with recommendations of a prudent use have been posted at the train stations, bus stations, along the public advertising spots downtown, at the TV, in different channel and at high audience times, on private newspapers and on free newspapers, all in a big national campaign, which will take unless two months. This campaign has also been structured on different languages through the Spanish country along the different autonomies, the most important ones along the country. On the other side, a complete dossier directed to physicians at primary care consults and to physicians of hospitals, also to pharmacists, dossier which included audio- visual material for educational purposes plus brochures and posters with explanations about the causes of this big public health problem and with the objectives of the campaign, the importance for a rational use of antibiotics, for rational prescriptions by family physicians and pediatricians, drilling in the obligations ruled by law that antibiotic should be acquired just by means of a physician made prescription.

During these two months since 2006 by means of: 3.000 TV spots, of 25 seconds each, 600 radio emissions, 200 press advertisings, 7.600 big posters along the streets downtown and 10 million internet messages have been spread. Besides, 2 million prints and 25.000 posters have been distributed by the pharmacy offices.

Web page to campaign access is the following:
www.antibiotics.msc.es

All this effort is the result of near twenty years of pressure until it got political support. The document released in 1995, by an academic Task Force of the Spanish Ministry of Health achieved significant national and international impact with the title: Resistance to Antimicrobial Agents in Spain: What can be done? (see: **Clin. Infect Dis** 1996; 23: 819, and other comments from S.B. Levy in **Clin**

Infect Dis 1996; 23: 824, also by Fridmodt – Moller **Clin Infect Dis** 1997; 25: 939), is the essence to this campaign..

The reason of all this pressure from the scientific community was that Spain has one of the highest rates of antibiotic consumption ; "Spanish" resistant bacterial clones have been probably exported to other parts of the world. Well defined objectives for surveillance and control were suggested to Public Health Authorities. In 1998, Spain was present at The Copenhagen Conference "The Microbial Threat", where again the Spanish Ministry of Health assured the presence of Spanish scientists involved in antibiotic resistance in humans and animals. The new opportunity came when the Spanish Presidency of the Union (January – June 2002) the Spanish scientific community strongly recommended the celebrations of an European Conference on antimicrobial resistance in Spain. The Political decisions helping scientists to improve measures and diminish antibiotic resistance were urgently needed.

Fortunately, during 2006 national authorities are beginning to respond, future trends on antibiotic surveillance and resistance control should be developed.

Future, interventions directed towards slowing emergence of resistance and controlling spread of resistant strains to be followed in Spain by means of :

1. - Surveillance of the evolution on antibiotic resistance and antibiotic consumption monitoring (EARSS and ESAC).
2. - Approach to veterinary antibiotic use, legislation and regulation.
3. - Improve new guidelines with recommendations to antibiotic use on adults and children, with the sponsorship of the Scientific Societies and the Public Health Department of the Ministry of Health.
4. - Antibiotics as Prescription based only drugs. Enforce the law (just physicians and veterinaries may prescribe antibiotics), and stop antibiotic self medication.
- 6.- National Co-operation of the Health Authorities with international organizations WHO, EC , ECDC, APUA, EMEA, DANMAP, etc.

Enclosed pictures

Figure 1, 2 and 3: Antibiotic campaign. adults and children (with the permission of the Spanish Ministry of Health).

Figure 4: Antibiotic recommendations to the community (with the permission of the Spanish Ministry of Health).