

Superbug Warning: UK Has the Fifth Highest MRSA Rate in Europe

Maidenhead, December 14th. Data published in the European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (EARSS) 2005 Annual Report, highlights that for the sixth year running, MRSA prevalence is rising consistently across Europe, with the UK being the fifth worst affected in Europe after Portugal, Malta, Cyprus and Romania.¹ The report states, however, that two countries – Slovenia and France have managed to decrease infection rates through implementing the appropriate long term control efforts – yet the UK has not managed to reverse the trend over the last 6 years. The overall increase in MRSA, is largely symptomatic of rising antimicrobial resistance (AMR)¹ - the increasing number of resistant pathogens across the UK & Europe. The report warns that AMR is seriously threatening the successful and effective treatment of infections – and can result in a higher death toll and disease burden.¹

Inappropriate use of antibiotics continues to be a major contributory factor to AMR. Many of these causative organisms, such as MRSA, have developed resistance to multiple antibiotics.² Hospital patients, as a result of their sometimes weakened immune systems, are particularly vulnerable to these resistant strains,³ and can develop infections. When these clinical complications are added to patients' existing medical conditions they can prove fatal or lead to longer stays in hospital, and therefore become a greater burden on health care systems.^{2,4}

Professor Mark Wilcox, Clinical Director of Microbiology & Infection Control, Leeds Teaching Hospital, explains, "The findings of the EARSS report are worrying and clearly illustrate that antibiotic resistance is continuing to increase markedly. If this trend continues and is not tackled effectively, it is likely that more patients will die because of infections caused by multi-drug resistant bacteria. The financial effects of increased hospital stays and subsequent treatment will continue to drain the UK healthcare system. Appropriate management and treatment regimens need to be implemented and audited for their effectiveness."

Wyeth

Currently, there are more than 300,000 cases of hospital acquired infections (HAI) per year in the UK⁵. Patients with HAIs stay in hospital 3 times longer than non-infected patients⁵ and overall, HAIs cause more than 5,000 deaths per year in the UK⁶ – that is almost 8 times more than pedestrians killed in road accidents in the UK per year⁷. The resulting financial burden on the NHS is approximately £1 billion per year⁶ – almost 3 times more than it costs to treat patients with HIV per year.⁸

Professor Wilcox explains, "Increasing antimicrobial resistance is a complicating factor in the treatment of infections - particularly in the hospital setting. When a patient develops a serious infection in hospital it usually takes between 24 and 48 hours to identify the bacteria responsible. In these critical early stages of treatment, it is important to have efficacious broad-spectrum antibiotics available. Tygacil[®] (tigecycline) is a useful new alternative broad spectrum antibiotic option that provides cover against the types of multi-drug resistant bacteria - that are increasingly common in Europe."

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Notes to Editors

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About EARSS

The European Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (EARSS), funded by Health and Consumer Protection, Directorate G of the European Commission and coordinated by the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM), is an international network of national surveillance systems, which collects comparable and validated antimicrobial susceptibility data for public health purposes. Since 2004, surveillance of antimicrobial susceptibility has been monitored in *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Enterococcus faecalis/faecium* causing invasive infections and monitors variations of antimicrobial resistance over time and place.



References

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