

Antibiotic Awareness Week activities in the Pacific Island countries November 2016

Thank you for all the contributions from Pacific island Countries and from WHO WPRO.

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http://sites.wpro.who.int/antibiotic_awareness/?page_id=330

The first 'World Antibiotic Awareness Week' was held in 2015 to help raise the awareness of antibiotic resistance and promote the responsible use of antibiotics. In 2016 the World Antibiotic Awareness Week was held November 14---20. The 'Week' will become an annual event.

The threat of antibiotics losing their effectiveness has become so serious that the World Health Organisation has seen the need for an ongoing global campaign to use antibiotics wisely. When they are used unwisely, for example if instructions are not followed by the patient, they can lose their power to treat infections. Antibiotic resistance occurs naturally, but misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals is accelerating the process. The threat is as serious in the Pacific Islands as anywhere.

Almost two---thirds of some 10,000 people surveyed across 12 countries by the WHO say they know antibiotic resistance is an issue that could affect them and their families, but how it affects them and what they can do to address it are not well understood.

There is considerable confusion in communities about the role of antibiotics. For example, 64 per cent of respondents in the above study believe antibiotics can be used to treat colds and flu, despite the fact that antibiotics have no impact on viruses. Close to one third of people surveyed believe they should stop taking antibiotics when they feel better, rather than completing the prescribed course of treatment. We are aware also, that some people believe that paracetamol is a sort of antibiotic and that antibiotics can be used for pain. These beliefs are common in Pacific Island Countries (PICs) too.

In the PICs in 2016 the WAAW activities were led by Pharmacy departments, Infection Control Committees, National Medicines and Therapeutics Committees; and an enormous amount of creativity and diversity was demonstrated.

The use of posters, leaflets, meetings, workshops with prescribers and health workers, radio spots and newspaper publicity to share messages was common to all. The WHO generously supplied posters, leaflets and other IEC material for all to use or adapt. Radio talk---backs were conducted in many PICs with the pharmacy staff demonstrating their comprehensive knowledge with great presentation skills. In addition each PIC used unique and innovative ways to spread the message.

Cook Islands

The new Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan was launched at Rarotonga hospital on November 19, 2016, opening the World Antibiotics Awareness week in the Cook Islands. Health secretary Liz Iro highlighted the importance of using antibiotics effectively. She said 'Clinicians need to make the right choice of antibiotics and right dosage for individual patients. 'Overuse and misuse of antibiotics means they will no longer work in the future.'

Recognising that Antibiotic resistance is now one of the biggest threats to global health, the Cook Islands Ministry of Health aims to make antibiotic prescriptions more effective by prescribers' adherence to the recommendations in the antibiotic guidelines handbook that was launched in 2015.

Doctor Deacon Teapa, Health Secretary Liz Iro, Tinomana Tokerau Ariki (Tokerau Munro) and Tiikura Mataiapo Tai Kavana Adamson at the Antibiotics guidelines launch



Fiji

Campaign materials included T-shirts in all sizes for children and adults. Yellow T-shirts were highly visible across all Fiji in streets and markets as well as in the health facilities.



All divisions engaged in activities such as educational programs, continuing medical education sessions, distribution of brochures, playing of videos to create awareness on the issue of Antimicrobial Resistance in addition to promoting rational use of antibiotics amongst health professionals and the general public. The biggest highlight of the Antibiotic Awareness Week 2016 campaign was the launch of the National AMR Operational Plan at Colonial War Memorial (CWM) Hospital that was attended by health professionals, public, Fiji National University students, and stakeholders such as the WHO, Global Fund, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Consumer Council of Fiji and Biosecurity Authority of Fiji. The chief guest of the evening was the Honourable Minister of Health and Medical Services, Ms Rosy Akbar. Her engagement was a sign of political support for AMR in Fiji.

Awareness for the public was also created through advertisements in radio and television, which played the whole week of the campaign. A lunch hour *Zumba* session was organised at the Fiji Pharmaceutical and Biomedical Services Centre to create awareness amongst staff about AMR and the importance of wellness.



Suva Market sellers were engaged in conversations about Antimicrobial Resistance and then they were provided with T-shirts.

Collaboration with the Consumer Council of Fiji (CCOF) is always beneficial and the partnership really enhanced the activities of the week. The Consumer Council Fact Sheet can be found here:

http://www.consumersfiji.org/upload/Factsheets/English_Misuse%20of%20Antibiotics.pdf

Kiribati

In Kiribati the Infectious Disease Committee planned and organized the WAAW with the help of the Pharmacy and nursing staff. A newsletter was sent to all areas of Kiribati. A perception survey had been done to get information



about what people know about antibiotics.

A roadshow was conducted over three days on south Tarawa (the island capital of Kiribati) and an update on antimicrobial resistance together with a ceftriaxone usage report was provided to prescribers along with suggestions for the way forward to combat AMR.

A youth drama competition between different villages was held in Bairiki Square, South Tarawa with an award for the best performing group.

Community groups were invited to do drama or dance or any public show focusing on the theme of AAW. The organisers decided the criteria and who would be on the assessment panel.

On the 20th November, four groups came to Bairiki and did their shows..... all were excellent in terms of getting the messages out. They were scored on timing, clear messages, costumes, entertainment value and extra curricular features.



The winner (awarded \$300.00 cash) was Bonriki Youth Club because of their great effort in bringing the crowd in; and their show was very clear, funny and within the allowed time. The second prize went to another youth group (awarded \$200.00) for perfect costumes; and a very musical and dynamic dancing show.

The other two groups were awarded \$100 each because of their effort as well in putting on shows that delivered the message. It was clear they all had done their research and understood well the AAW concepts.

A video record of the whole activity was made, and part of it can be seen here

 [IMG_5030.MOV](#)

A Q&A radio session will be held for one week every month for 3 months. Perception surveys on rational prescribing/use was done at Maneaba and school events during awareness week.

Marshall Islands

In the Marshall Islands, in addition to the dissemination of photos, posters and information from the centre to all outer island health facilities – public and private – in English and Marshallese – mass text messages were sent through mobile phone network. The text messages were sent to all mobile phones through the national telecommunication network. That mechanism is regularly used for sharing information in the Marshall Islands.



Messages to health professionals were to motivate them to prescribe/dispense antibiotics more appropriately to ensure responsible use and be the drivers of behavioural change.

For community people messages aimed to educate, inform and engage patients and consumers as well as health professionals about the responsible use of antibiotics and reduce self-medication and/or expectation of prescription for antibiotics for common viral infections (colds, flu, sore throats).



Lunch time seminars were held over two weeks in the four main hospitals.

Palau

Palau's week was organised by the Palau Drugs and Therapeutics Committee (PDTC) in collaboration with Pharmacy. Leadership from the NMTC meant the medical practitioners could be more likely to engage with the messages of the campaign.

The WAAW program was launched with a Presidential Declaration and a very busy week of activities followed.



The AAW campaign T-shirts were also distributed on Monday and the rest were given during the symposiums. The two newspapers, Tia Belau and Island Times, published WAAW posters and general public information in one of their weekly publications. The National TV provider screened the info-graphics on two of its channels and its electronic Bill Board during the week and one of them continued for three more weeks.

The Health symposiums on the Wednesday and Thursday were attended by MOH doctors, nurses and ancillary staff, doctors, nurses and other staff and the veterinarians from the private clinics. During the week public health nurses administered flu vaccines for the public in the Hospital foyer and there was an increased number of people coming to the hospital to get their flu vaccines. The message was prevention is better than cure.

Facebook was used to share a range of very clever messages, for example this one:

Selaima Malani Laiabalavu

15 November

Parents: Antibiotics are not effective against viral infections like the common cold, flu, most sore throats, bronchitis, and many sinus and ear infections. Taking antibiotics can also have harmful side effects for you or your child. Read more about when antibiotics are and aren't needed: [<link>](#)

Illness	Usual Cause		Antibiotic Needed
	Viruses	Bacteria	
Cold/Runny Nose	✓		NO
Bronchitis/Chest Cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	✓		NO
Whooping Cough		✓	Yes
Flu	✓		NO
Strep Throat		✓	Yes
Sore Throat (except strep)	✓		NO
Fluid in the Middle Ear (otitis media with effusion)	✓		NO
Urinary Tract Infection		✓	Yes

After broadcasts on Palau Wave Radio *youtube* videos were prepared in local language focusing on the issues of WAAW and starring Pharmacist Clarette Matlab with the director of clinical service and the director of nursing.

MOH ~ World Antibiotic Awareness Week - 11/14/16 Palau Wave Radio 89.9 PWF144 views



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FBVYQv8Qb8>

Clarette also starred in the MoH update video on October 26.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMRdtVC2tIY>

The PDTC met on the Friday to kick start the review of the current Antibiotic Guidelines and evaluate the AAW 2016 campaign. A review completion workshop is planned which will be followed soon after by the printing of the reviewed antibiotic guidelines.

On Saturday, 19th November, the Belau (Palau) Medical Society organized a half day conference on wound care and a presentation by Dr. Myra Adelbai on AMR was also part of the conference agenda. The conference was attended by 54 participants including doctors, nurses and healthcare workers from the government hospital and private clinics.

Samoa

In **Samoa** the National Action Plan on AMR was launched during the WAA week

In addition to the use of leaflets, posters and other IEC materials, Bumper Stickers ensured high visibility and spread of the AMR branding and messages.



Staff at information stations gave impromptu talks and information about AMR and the importance of hand washing



Radio and TV talk back shows on all national radio featured health professionals discussing AMR and the importance of rational prescribing of antibiotics.

A trivia night and a sports day also took place.

The Target Audience for the trivia night was Animal and Human health professionals and the general public.

A Trivia night is a fun way to learn more about the importance of the responsible use of antibiotics, and the consequences if we do not act now. There were ten categories and topics included politics, celebrity gossip, tv, etc. and 'Healthy Stuff'. General knowledge and current affairs and other questions were included to make it more fun. The expected outcome is more community coverage of the awareness on antimicrobial resistance and its significant negative impact

A very clever and comprehensive Face Book page covering the activities can be seen here

<https://www.facebook.com/amrsamoa/>

Recent special reports from the Laboratory have identified multi resistant organisms. In one month alone, a total of nine meropenem---resistant bacteria were isolated from seven different patients. All patients were inpatients, which is a powerful reminder to all healthcare professionals to be stringent and compliant with all infection control protocols. Meropenem is the last resort drug here in Samoa, and all healthcare professional should ensure the prevention of the spread of these meropenem---resistant organisms.

A forum on the AMR Action Plan is being held over two days with the main objective to directly address the currently available information and data on antibiotics resistance and most importantly for animal and human health professionals to discuss collaborative ways to address it and to ensure it will not worsen in the next 10 years.

The forum will be calling on the different professional groups to present any work that they are doing on AMR. For example, the recent consultations on the National Action Plan included pharmacists from the private sector.

Usually the private pharmacies are reluctant to share their data with the public sector. This forum invites the private pharmacies and gives an opportunity to present any data they feel they can share on the antibiotic prescriptions that come through their pharmacies.

In terms of the hospital wards, this could be an opportunity for the wards to present any of the work that they are doing or auditing in the wards. It could also present a forum to share the audits on the use of the antibiotic guideline. The organizing team for the forum will be scouting for any work or data on AMR that can be presented and will coax the different parties to participate.

Expected Outcome: As a forum focusing on professionals sharing about AMR this presents a medium to share ideas and innovative ways to address the issues that are presented. It will also be an opportunity to bring AMR to the forefront and raise the awareness within the professional bodies on AMR.

Solomon Islands

In the Solomon Islands the Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee had been launched during the previous month.

An antibiotic point prevalence study of antibiotic use at the National Referral Hospital has been conducted every three months so the opportunity was taken to report back to prescribers during the week about how they were going with prescribing according to the new Antibiotic Guidelines.

Pharmacy staff presented the regular Continuing Medical Education session at the hospital during antibiotic week on antimicrobial resistance.

Stickers were produced that were fixed to all antibiotics dispensed during the week, to alert patients in government facilities that their medicines were antibiotics and they need to be used properly (don't share, finish the course etc). The stickers were distributed to the private pharmacies as well.

In addition, Quizzes were conducted with hospital staff and with patients waiting at the National Referral Hospital. The prize for nursing staff was top---up for their phone and the public received lollipops.

Solomon Islands emphasized that their small budget meant that the focus was on inexpensive activities.



Tonga

WAAW activities extended throughout the community from the Hospital Board to the churches. Board Members are heads of churches so people from different churches were involved. The WAAW special Sunday Service and Choir Night featured a keynote presentation from the Minister.

The opening ceremony from the beautifully prepared stage included speeches from WHO and the Minister of Health. Guests were also treated with a performance from the local drama group who acted out a skit about antibiotic resistance. This was filmed and broadcast on television. The official opening of the week was rounded off with a Church Service.

Tonga is also preparing to develop an AMR Plan.



During the week, it was reported on Radio and TV Tonga that five lives have been claimed by methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) bacteria in Tonga this year alone and 73 people had been diagnosed with MRSA. Susceptibility testing was completed during WAAW to better quantify Tonga's MRSA rates. It was found that 42% of *Staph. aureus* are resistant, up from 39% from 2015. However these results are subject to selection bias and do not reflect the true community rate, which will be lower than what is reported.

Last year 77 people had been diagnosed with this bacterial disease that is resistant to antibiotics; and also last year five people died from this disease.

Throughout the week there were also television broadcasts with a different panel of doctors and a pharmacist discussing different aspects of antibiotic awareness e.g. the history of it, how it can affect those with NCDs etc.

The pharmacy department staff broke up into small groups and twice a day (morning and afternoon) presented to people at the hospital. They focused on the outpatients departments waiting areas: x-ray, diabetes, general outpatients, and presented the posters that WHO had provided. They explained in Tongan what they meant, elaborated on them and then answered questions from the patients.



They were also fortunate that Richard Everts, an infectious disease consultant, was present. He has been funded by WHO to lead the preparation of Tonga's new antibiotic standard treatment guidelines. During the week he presented at the three day Tongan Medical Association annual conference themed around infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance attended by doctors from Tongatapu and the outer islands.

Highlighting the theme 'USE ANTIBIOTICS RESPONSIBLY' the Antibiotic Awareness Week was used by the Ministry of Health to focus on helping the public to understand the issues related to antibiotic resistance and the need to follow doctor's advice on the proper use of antibiotics. Drama presentations and an essay competition were also features of the week.

Antibiotic awareness week was closed with a Church service on Sunday, with the Reverend of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga reiterating the key messages from the week.

Tuvalu

Activities included a Pledge signing activity on rational prescribing and use of antibiotics with key stakeholders, relevant ministries, NGOs and health professionals.

A training workshop on rational prescribing/using of antibiotics was conducted for health professionals. In addition, a drawing competition for school children and a fun run took place during the week.

Vanuatu

This is the first time Vanuatu took part in the WAAW. Organisers hope to have it again next year and to plan earlier and better for next time. It was also emphasized that meantime there should still be encouragement for the appropriate use of antibiotics within the community and continued education of health professionals and the community about medicines and taking and using them wisely and appropriately. Features of the Vanuatu Week were video shows and an information booth. Vanuatu's National Medicines Policy was launched during that WAAW, on Wednesday 16th of November 2016, and the program ended with a presentation on Antibiotic Resistance/ AMR stewardship to health professionals.



The information booths, run by pharmacists were at the main entrance of Vila Central Hospital and Northern Provincial Hospital where the general public were exposed to the various posters and pamphlets and they could take the pledge to use antibiotics wisely.

On November 16, 60 health care professionals attended an education session and the participants were invited to attend World Antibiotic Awareness Information Day on Friday 18th November. There was also a radio *tokbak* show on the National broadcasting radio – 'Radio Vanuatu' --- about appropriate and wise use of Antibiotics and relating to the theme 'Handle Antibiotics With Care'.

Two TV screens in the OPD ran continuous messages and the health minister encouraged all members of the community to use this opportunity to ask questions and talk with the friendly clinical pharmacists at Vila Central Hospital to increase their understanding about 'this important public health issue'.

A text message was sent to all mobile phones (most people have two networks for full coverage) --- it stressed the importance of finishing your course of antibiotics and not sharing them with others. That created a lot of interest.

Confusion exists about what is an antibiotic --- many thinking paracetamol is an antibiotic.

Intersectoral discussions on AMR were held with other key sectors, primarily Agriculture.

There were also some questions in Malekula (a big cattle producing island) about the use of antibiotics in cattle.

Having a developed beef export industry Vanuatu is unique amongst the Pacific Islands. The industry is well regulated and has proved itself to be successful in exporting beef to overseas markets with stringent import and quality standards such as Australia, Japan, New Zealand and New Caledonia.

Vanuatu beef are naturally grass---fed, and are antibiotic and hormone free. No pharmaceuticals are used in the raising of the cattle.

