

Optimising antimicrobial stewardship in Australian primary care

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Australia is one of the highest antimicrobials (antibiotic) prescribing countries in the developed world. Overprescription and inappropriate prescribing is contributing to the development of antimicrobial resistant infections, as well as increasing adverse side effects and treatment costs.

Without action, the expected global costs of antimicrobial resistance will exceed \$1 trillion by 2050. Preventing antimicrobial resistance requires the establishment of antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) practices in prescribing. In Australia, AMS programs are well established in secondary and tertiary care.

However, 80% of antibiotics in Australia are prescribed within primary care. Despite this, AMS programs are yet to be widely established within primary care. To prevent antimicrobial resistance, barriers to AMS programs in primary care must be addressed, and interprofessional collaboration between general practice and community pharmacy fostered.

Recommendations

- Implementation of AMS in primary care must be supported through the development and implementation of training programs in general practice and community pharmacy; and funding for better models of care through the infectious disease functional units which can provide expert AMS advice.
- Effective AMS will require greater interprofessional collaboration between general practice and community pharmacy. This can be supported through practice agreements and collaborative prescribing models; and will bring prescribing programs in line with international evidence and practice. The implementation of a national governance framework will ensure accountability for AMS activities.
- Tools which reduce clinical uncertainty and improve antimicrobial prescribing practices should be implemented in primary care, including digital clinical decision support tools and point-of-care testing.
- Increased data collection and monitoring of antimicrobial prescribing is needed to drive optimal prescribing in primary care. This will require the establishment of a digital platform to collect prescribing data, and a primary care audit and feedback program which supports AMS evaluation and real-time monitoring of prescriptions.



AHHA acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Nation Peoples and the Traditional Custodians of this land. We respect their continued connection to land and sea, country, kin, and community. AHHA also pays our respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging as the custodians of knowledge and lore.