



Introduction of Antibiotic Stewardship Programme in Primary Care

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global public health concern. For the past few decades, AMR has been a growing threat to effective treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites. AMR results in reduced efficacy of antimicrobials, making the treatment of patients difficult, costly or even impossible. The impact is felt particularly by vulnerable patients, as it can result in prolonged illness and increased mortality.

Hong Kong, like many other developed economies, is experiencing a significant public health threat from AMR. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Government) has all along recognised the growing problem of AMR. Different sectors have been implementing control measures with a common view to contain its spread. In July 2017, the Government launched the [Hong Kong Strategy and Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance \(2017-2022\)](#), by adopting the “One Health” approach as recommended by international health agencies, to outline key areas, objectives and actions to contain the growing threat of AMR in Hong Kong. One of its key areas is to optimise use of antimicrobials.

A healthcare system can generally be divided into three levels of care: primary, secondary and tertiary. Secondary and tertiary care mainly include specialist and hospital services while primary care is the first level of care in the whole healthcare system and is also the first point of contact for people in a continuing healthcare process. Family doctors in primary care play an important role in AMR containment measures, not only by practicing rational antibiotics prescription, but also educating and empowering patients on safe use of antibiotics during clinical encounters.

According to the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), rational use of medicines requires “patients receive medications appropriate to their clinical needs, in doses that meet their own individual requirements, for an adequate period of time and at the lowest cost to them and their community”. Antibiotic stewardship programme (ASP) has been identified as a key measure for reducing unnecessary prescriptions, suppressing AMR emergence, and at the same time controlling medical expenses.

Under the ASP in Primary Care, the Centre of Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) publishes guidance notes for family doctors and healthcare professionals as reference about treatments for different common infections and recommends treatment choices, doses and durations of antibiotics based on the best available clinical evidence and common local practice for each infection. The guidance notes are being developed in consultation with key stakeholders in primary care settings such that recommendations can be tailored to their needs. We shall continuously review the latest research, together with local prevalence of pathogens and associated antibiotics susceptibility profiles to update the guidance notes. In addition, patient education materials are available to raise their awareness and enable them to use antibiotics appropriately.

Let us work together for the wellness of the public and thank you again for your support.

Version: October 2017