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2nd. World Antibiotic Awareness Week: results of a survey among primary care physicians on prescribing antibiotics and their knowledge of antimicrobial resistance

On the 2nd. World Antibiotic Awareness Week the National Institute of Public Health-NIH with World Health Organization conducted a survey among primary care physicians on their approach to prescribing antibiotics and their knowledge of antimicrobial resistance.

The study of 100 doctors working in both private (61%) and public institutions (34%) divided into four specializations: internists, family doctors, general practitioners and pediatricians and three age groups (each containing around 30 people): 30-49 years, 50-60 years and over 60 years old. Doctors were asked 8 questions and in the analysis of each question age, specialization and place of work were considered.

Below key findings of the study are presented.

Most often, doctors prescribe antibiotics as much as needed (about 70%). Doctors who prescribe antibiotics as rarely as possible (approx. 30%) most likely are aware of the fact that the antibiotic should be treated as "a drug of last resort" because in times of increasing antimicrobial resistance prescribing medicines "as needed" is still too much. The most educated groups are pediatricians (56%) and younger physicians (36%).

Unfortunately, patients often try to "force" prescribing antibiotics on doctors (over 50% respond that it happens often), which means that there is a need to educate the public on what antibiotics are and how they work. 33% of pediatricians are requested by adults for antibiotics for themselves. 20 to 27% of physicians, with the exception of pediatricians, never yields under pressure of patients, however most doctors occasionally yield under



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pressure and prescribe antibiotics (this group includes 67% of pediatricians). Only 7% to 13% of doctors come across patients who are aware that the antibiotic is "a drug of last resort".

Only 11% to 22% of doctors are aware that lack of hygiene significantly conduce to drug resistance, because it facilitates spreading drug-resistant strains. Such awareness is mainly observed in a group of people over 60 years old - up to 17%. Lack of knowledge among young doctors in this area is alarming.

Only 13% to 22% of doctors believe that the problem of antimicrobial resistance significantly concerns their practice. And 40% of general practitioners treat this problem as insignificant. It raises fears that as many as 42% of physicians aged 30-49 do not see the problem of antimicrobial resistance.

Almost 100% of physicians inform their patients that they must not interrupt the treatment with antibiotics. Slightly smaller group instructs patients on how to take antibiotics. Also, not every doctor indicates that patients must not dispense the drug on their own and doctors do not warn patients against taking antibiotics prescribed to another person.