

PRESS STATEMENT

Report of new “superbugs” emphasises ill-preparedness across Europe to meet this emerging public health challenge

12 AUGUST 2010: Research just published that identifies new highly antibiotic-resistant bacteria reinforces the frequency with which similar strains of so-called “superbugs” are being discovered across Europe, according to the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID).

The study by Professor Timothy Walsh from Cardiff University and colleagues, published in *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, reports the occurrence in several common bacteria of a resistance mechanism called New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase (NDM-1) that makes those bacteria unresponsive to treatment with almost all antibiotics, including ones often used as a last resort, called carbapenems.

“These latest reports on the rapid spread of drug-resistant bacteria reinforce the nature and size of the problem that we face,” says Professor Giuseppe Cornaglia, President of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases.

“Across Europe we have been monitoring and reporting on the emergence of similar carbapenem-resistant bacteria for the past 10 years, since their first appearance in Verona, Italy. Experiences from countries such as Italy, Greece and Israel have shown that if public health professionals do not have sufficient preparedness plans and resources allocated, infection caused by carbapenem-resistant bacteria poses a substantial threat to both patients and the healthcare system.”

ESCMID stresses that no new antibiotics to treat such infections are likely to be available for at least 10 years, and that the public health community must step up surveillance and monitoring efforts at both the national level and across multi-country networks to track what infections are occurring and how best to respond.

“As a scientific society that reaches out to more than 33,000 microbiologists and infectious diseases specialists in Europe and around the world, ESCMID has been promoting a multifaceted approach to such infections that focuses first and foremost on containment at all levels. We have to look at improving surveillance and infection control, at management strategies that go beyond reliance on antibiotics to control infections, and at expanding the public health role of microbiologists in response to such new threats”, said Professor Cornaglia.

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The European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infection-related diseases. This is achieved by promoting and supporting research, education, training, and good medical practice.