Antibiotic Awareness Day: the burden of infections with antibiotic resistant bacteria.

Sources:

Background

With the **European Antibiotic Awareness Day** ahead, an interesting article on the burden of infections with antibiotic resistant bacteria was published two weeks ago by the European Center for Disease Control in *Lancet Infectious Diseases*. In this study, the authors estimated more than 670,000 infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria between Jan 1, 2015, and Dec 31, 2015. The infections caused an estimated number of deaths more than 33,000. In addition, for the first time, the health burden of five types of infection with antibiotic-resistant bacteria was expressed in disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) that was estimated to be over 870,000. The burden for the EU and European Economic Area (EEA) appeared to be highest in infants under the age of one year and people aged 65 years or older. The authors further stated that “the contribution of various antibiotic-resistant bacteria to the overall burden varies greatly between countries, thus highlighting the need for prevention and control strategies tailored to the need of each EU/EEA country”. As more than 63% of the infections were associated with healthcare, it was stressed once more the importance of adequate infection prevention and control measures, as well as antibiotic stewardship in order to reduce the number of healthcare-associated infections. This is even more important when considering that 39% of the burden is caused by infections with bacteria resistant to last-line antibiotics such as carbapenems and colistin. This is especially worrisome, as it is an increase from 2007, and also considering the fact that these antibiotics are the last treatment options available.

Clearly, studies as this provide useful information for public health decision-makers prioritising interventions for infectious diseases. However, they should also be communicated to the community to make also “patients” more aware of the danger of using antibiotics without a real indication.

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