

S315

Symposium

European network for surveillance of gonococcal infections

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Gonorrhoea is the second most common bacterial sexually transmitted infection in most countries across Europe. Public health control is dependent on prevention measures and effective antimicrobial therapy and will be threatened by the emergence of resistance and therapeutic failure to current therapies. Surveillance of gonococcal infections is of paramount importance to monitor the prevalence of antimicrobial resistance and detect drifts in susceptibility in order to inform national and international guidelines. Many countries in Europe maintain national programmes, but with a mobile population it is essential to have a European wide approach to provide timely and co-ordinated information to prevent the spread of antimicrobial resistant gonorrhoea across Europe. Surveillance for gonococcal antimicrobial resistance across Europe was initiated in 2004, and since 2008 has been a component of the European network for the surveillance for sexually transmitted infections, which is co-ordinated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). The aims of the microbiology component are to improve the quality of laboratory surveillance of gonorrhoea, Chlamydia (including LGV) and syphilis and to strengthen surveillance of *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* susceptibility in EU/EEA Member States and candidate countries. A network of reference and expert laboratories participates in the European Gonococcal Antimicrobial Susceptibility Programme, Euro-GASP. The programme consists of a number of components including sentinel surveillance of gonococcal resistance to therapeutic antimicrobial agents, external quality assurance, assessment of laboratory capacity, training courses and use of molecular typing for public health purposes. As decreased susceptibility and therapeutic failure emerges to the current agents of choice in most countries, the extended spectrum cephalosporins, it is paramount that data is obtained and disseminated in a timely manner. To achieve this objective, sentinel surveillance of antimicrobial resistance has been established in 21 countries. Initially testing was centralised and provided annual data but recently has been extended to include decentralised testing and to provide data twice yearly. A key component of Euro-GASP is to provide training to increase capacity in non-participating countries to improve coverage and representativeness.