

<INSERT: Place, date>

Dear Pharmacist,

We are contacting you as part of a Europe-wide initiative, to call your attention to the alarming rise in antibiotic resistance across Europe and to enlist your support in fighting this trend.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), together with health authorities across the European Union, coordinates European Antibiotic Awareness Day - a European health initiative marked annually on 18 November. The focus this year is to work with pharmacists, such as yourself, to promote appropriate use of antibiotics and inform patients about the risks of self-medication with antibiotics.

Antibiotic resistance has increased in the past years to the point of being a major threat to the future effectiveness of antibiotics. Combined with a lack of new antibiotic treatments, the increase in antibiotic-resistant bacteria now constitutes a serious risk to public health.

As you know, antibiotic resistance is linked to the extent and the way in which antibiotics are used. In human medicine, primary care accounts for the largest part (80-90%) of antibiotic use. Self-medication with antibiotics includes both dispensation of an antibiotic without a prescription and unnecessary use of left-over antibiotics. The role of the pharmacist is particularly important in this context, as antibiotics need to be prescribed and dispensed responsibly, and used correctly.

Recent surveys (e.g. Eurobarometer) have shown that, in all countries, a substantial majority of patients obtain antibiotics with a medical prescription. However, there is a persistent minority of patients who still consume antibiotics without a prescription (3%) or use left-over antibiotics from a previous course (2%). The extent of the problem varies from country to country. There is therefore a specific need to promote appropriate use of antibiotics to patients attending pharmacies throughout Europe.

Your contribution to raising awareness about prudent antibiotic use is crucial. Being in direct contact with patients on a daily basis, you are best placed to have an impact on their perceptions and attitudes towards their illness and their perceived need for antibiotics.

ECDC has produced a number of information materials to support you with educating patients on appropriate antibiotic use. We have prepared a few information materials and more will be provided in the near future. In particular, please find herewith general key messages, a visual that can be printed on, for example, pharmacy bags, a poster that can be shown to patients in pharmacies to provide information about self-medication and the appropriate use of antibiotics. The European Antibiotic Awareness Day website (<http://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu>) offers additional resources for communicating antibiotic awareness in primary care, as well as links to further reading and ideas for ways to help patients.

We thank you in advance for your support and cooperation. With your help, we aim to decrease the unnecessary use of antibiotics so that these life-saving medicines can remain effective in years to come.

<INSERT: Name>
e.g. Minister of Health, <INSERT: Country>

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