



## Antibiotic Stewardship in Asia : The current situation

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Stewardship is the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care. Antibiotic stewardship is now an important public health function as antibiotic resistance has become one of the most important clinical challenges today.

Antibiotic stewardship should be practiced at international, national and institutional levels. At the international level the World Health Organisation has played a key role in encouraging all countries to adopt national strategies to contain antibiotic resistance. A national strategy should be a multi-faceted approach which should include strengthening antibiotic resistance surveillance, developing and implementing antibiotic guidelines for practitioners, conducting antibiotic utilization studies, improving access to and upgrading the quality of microbiological diagnostic facilities, increasing public awareness of antibiotic resistance and controlling and regulating the use of antibiotics for both medicinal and non-medicinal purposes.

A quick survey of 11 Asian countries was conducted to provide a snapshot overview of antibiotic stewardship in Asia. The participating countries were Australia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. In several countries there are national policies on antibiotic stewardship but institutional level stewardship programmes are implemented in all the countries surveyed. National as well as institutional prescribing guidelines on antibiotic prescribing are generally available. The majority of countries have national drug formularies. Antimicrobial resistance surveillance is undertaken on a national basis in most countries. Antimicrobial utilization studies are carried out in some countries on a national and institutional basis. Infection control programmes are instituted in hospitals in all the countries surveyed.

In many Asian countries antibiotic prescribing is still not regulated by legislation and only in a

few countries is the agricultural use of antibiotics under any form of regulation. In most Asian countries physicians prescribe as well as dispense antibiotics.

In conclusion antibiotic stewardship programmes have been developed in all the Asian countries surveyed. However there are areas which would require strengthening and these are legislation to control prescribing and the use of antimicrobials in agriculture. Measures should also be taken to separate the prescribing and dispensing functions of doctors.