

# Antimicrobial Stewardship – How Can Pharmacists Get Involved?



Written by Olivia Gallagher MPSI, Senior Antimicrobial Pharmacist, HSE Community Healthcare East

With World Antimicrobial Awareness Week coming up from the 18th-24th of November 2021, many of us are considering how we can contribute to the cause by increasing awareness and reducing resistance.

The overarching theme globally this year remains 'Antimicrobials: Handle with Care'. The campaign encourages all stakeholders including policy makers, healthcare providers and the general public to recognise that everyone can champion antimicrobial awareness.

As community pharmacists there are many resources available to support your active involvement in antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) and improve your knowledge in this specialist area of interest.

Within the HSE, a Senior Antimicrobial Pharmacist (AMP) has been recruited for each Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) area. These AMPs play a central role in coordinating and managing the delivery of antimicrobial stewardship across the CHO and nationally. To support your education in antimicrobial stewardship, the following resources are recommended by the AMPs:

## 1. Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IloP)

We are pleased to announce that a new eLearning module on AMS has been designed specifically for community pharmacists by the IloP, in collaboration with AMRIC and is now available on the IloP platform for continuing professional development (CPD). It has been sub-divided into three parts: 'Setting the Scene', 'From Principles to Practice', & 'Case Studies'.

These can be completed in their entirety or accessed and completed individually when necessary or desired. The first module aims to highlight the basic principles of antimicrobial stewardship and the basic concepts of antimicrobial resistance as well as explaining the function of AMRIC and the national initiatives underway in Ireland to safeguard patients taking antimicrobials. The second module focuses on safety issues for those patients taking antimicrobials, the

safety concerns around various classes of antimicrobials and the resources available to support AMS. The final module reflects on the role of the community pharmacist in optimising antimicrobial use, how AMS can be incorporated into practice and how we can communicate the principles of AMS to relevant stakeholders e.g. patients, carers, nurses, doctors etc.

## 2. HSeLanD



HSeLanD is the Health Service Executive's online learning and development portal. It contains over 200 eLearning programmes, resources, assessments and planning tools to support you in your role and in your continuing professional development. It is a free resource and is open to all, not just HSE staff. You simply need to create an account and browse the platform.

AMRIC (Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control), in collaboration with the AMP group, has devised a series of education modules for HSeLanD which cover an array of topics around the subjects of Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and AMS. Some of the most relevant modules available which relate to AMS in the community/ primary care setting include:

- a. AMRIC Introduction to Infection Prevention and Control and Antimicrobial Resistance



Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control Team

- b. AMRIC Antimicrobial Stewardship in Practice

- c. AMRIC Prevention and Management of Urinary Tract Infection

The suite of modules also includes a number of IPC modules which are very relevant to community pharmacists.

## 3. [www.antibioticprescribing.ie](http://www.antibioticprescribing.ie)

This is the National Antibiotic Prescribing Guidelines for Treatment of Infections in the Community. This website is an invaluable resource which includes a breakdown of the various treatments and conditions regularly treated in primary care as well as many useful resources such as information on safe prescribing of antimicrobials, key messages from AMRIC as well as advice on antimicrobial use in pregnancy, renal impairment, paediatrics and penicillin allergy. This website is co-ordinated and updated regularly by a panel of antimicrobial pharmacists, GPs, microbiologists, infectious disease specialists and other consultants as well as having input from community pharmacists. It is used widely by GPs across the country and we recommend that all community pharmacists should be familiar with its content and refer to it as a primary source of guidance on antimicrobial dispensing.

For those community pharmacists carrying out dispensing and Medication Use Reviews for patients in long term residential care facilities, it can be difficult to find supportive, practical resources to aid in the safe dispensing and review of medication. The website has a section dedicated to antimicrobial use in long term care facilities including resources on antimicrobial prophylaxis, catheterised patients and results from a recent nationwide study on the antimicrobial use in HSE Residential Care Facilities for Older Persons. This report contains key findings and key recommendations which may form a useful base for

quality improvement initiatives for multidisciplinary teams in your long term care facilities.

## 4. Get Involved

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week encourages everyone to 'Go Blue' to raise awareness of antimicrobial resistance, one of the leading global threats to public health. You can 'Go Blue' in your community pharmacy by encouraging staff to wear blue and/ or donning your pharmacy with blue balloons and bunting. This encourages a conversation with patients about the importance of avoiding unnecessary antibiotic use this winter. [www.undertheweather.ie](http://www.undertheweather.ie) is a very useful resource to signpost patients towards, or use in your pharmacy to print information for patients. This website provides information aimed at the public to encourage self-care measures they can take to control symptoms of self-limiting infections such as conjunctivitis, sore throat, coughs, colds and many more. Stickers are also available from [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie) or by emailing [healthinfo@hse.ie](mailto:healthinfo@hse.ie) to encourage children to 'fight the bugs' without antibiotics. As trusted healthcare professionals, one small conversation or intervention can have a lasting impact on your patients. **Will you 'Go Blue'** for antimicrobial resistance this November?

## 5. Twitter

Follow @AntibioticPresc on Twitter to keep abreast of the most recent updates to the Antibiotic Prescribing website as well as many other updates including upcoming events and webinars.



## 6. Contact Us

If you wish to contact your local antimicrobial pharmacist for advice, our details are all available on the 'About Us' section of [www.antibioticprescribing.ie](http://www.antibioticprescribing.ie)