

16 November 2017 – The Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, the National Institute of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) jointly organized a walk on 16 November 2017 as part of awareness-raising activities held during World Antibiotic Awareness Week, which runs from 13 to 19 November 2017. The walk was one of the several activities planned in Pakistan to create a better understanding of the issues surrounding antimicrobial resistance. The walk began at the gates of the National Institute of Health, and ended at the entrance gate leading towards Park Road, Islamabad.

Every year in November, World Antibiotic Awareness Week presents an opportunity to educate the public, health professionals, and policymakers on the dangers of antimicrobial resistance and ways to combat it at local, national and global levels. World Antibiotic Awareness Week is an opportunity to advocate for the proper use of antibiotics and raise awareness of antibiotics as a precious resource that must only be taken with a doctor's prescription. The aim is to help reduce the improper consumption of antibiotics, and keep antibiotics effective as long as possible so that those in need can get the best possible treatment, while reducing the threat of antimicrobial resistance.

The main message of World Antibiotic Awareness Week this year is “Always seek the advice of a health care professional before taking antibiotics,” which will be publicized with infographics including “Misusing and overusing antibiotics puts us all at risk,” “Everyone has a role to play,” and “Think twice: seek advice.”

Antimicrobial resistance is an issue that not only affects the health sector but also impacts veterinary science, agriculture and the environment. Among those who participated in the walk were National Institute of Health staff, College of Medical Technology students, and staff from the WHO Country Office, the National Veterinary Laboratory, the Pakistan Agricultural Research Organization, the National Agricultural Research Organization, and Shifa Hospital Islamabad. The participants carried banners, placards, brochures and posters displaying information and awareness-raising messages, with slogans in both Urdu and English highlighting the various themes of World Antibiotic Awareness Week. At the end of the walk, speakers from both the health and veterinary science sectors addressed the gathering, highlighting the importance of the responsible use of antibiotics and advocating for an end to self-medication.

The aim of the walk was to raise awareness of the adverse effects of the misuse and overuse of antibiotics on both humans and animals. Global misuse has increased greatly, resulting in a growing public health crisis of antimicrobial resistance which is responsible for increased

morbidity due to resistant infections and an associated increase in mortality rates worldwide.

In collaboration with the World Organisation for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, WHO has developed a global action plan on antimicrobial resistance to support the development, control, distribution and appropriate use of antimicrobial medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines and other interventions, while promoting affordable access to existing and new antimicrobials, and advocacy and antimicrobial resistance awareness-raising initiatives. As part of its global commitment to reducing antimicrobial resistance, Pakistan has also developed its own national action plan on antimicrobial resistance through a comprehensive consultative process involving a number of sectors including those of health, veterinary science, agriculture, and climate change, in addition to the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan.

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