

# Board of Health

Monthly Report - September 25, 2003

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## CONTACT US:

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## Antibiotic Resistant Organisms (A.R.O.) Campaign

*Submitted by Bonnie Erwin, P.H.N., Susan La Brie, P.H.N., and Tammy Welk, P.H.N.*

This fall the Health Unit will be launching a campaign to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics, in order to prevent the continuing rise in the emergence of Antibiotic Resistant Organisms or A.R.O.'s. This campaign launch is the beginning of a multi-year strategy.

The very first antibiotic was penicillin, which was developed in 1929. It was considered a miracle drug and it has saved millions of lives. Over the next decades penicillin has improved life expectancy by treating a variety of potential deadly diseases such as pneumonia and tuberculosis. Over time because of the overuse and misuse of antibiotics many bacteria have developed a resistance to penicillin and first-line antibiotics. Why is this of concern? When infections become resistant to first-line antibiotics, treatments have to switch to second or third-line drugs, which are nearly always much more expensive and sometimes more toxic (eg. the drugs needed to treat multi-drug resistant forms of tuberculosis are 100 times more expensive than first-line drugs).

A recent public opinion poll showed that close to 50% of Canadians believed that antibiotics were effective against viral illnesses such as the common cold. Antibiotics have no ability to kill viruses! Using antibiotics for an illness which is viral can contribute to the rise in antibiotic resistant bacteria. Many patients insist on antibiotics for an illness which is viral, hoping that it will make them or their child feel better, faster.

The Canadian Committee on Antibiotic Resistance (CCAR) reports that over half of the antibiotic prescriptions for Canadian pre-school children were unnecessary. The study of the Saskatchewan Drug Database which analyzed data on all respiratory infections in children under five years of age showed that in 1999, 56% of children in Saskatchewan visited a doctor

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for a respiratory infection, and 64% of these children received a prescription for an antibiotic. Compliance with appropriate guidelines would have resulted in an 85% reduction in antibiotic prescriptions in this age group. Everyone can take action to help control the growth of antibiotic resistant organisms and to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics.

This year we will be working with all grade two students and their parents in the tri-county area, physicians, hospitals and long term care facilities (L.T.C.F.), to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics. This initial project was funded by a \$5,000.00 grant received from the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and is to be used by the end of 2003.

## What Patients Can Do To Prevent Antibiotic Resistant Organisms (A.R.O.s)

- Do not expect to get antibiotics for every respiratory tract infection. Most of these infections are caused by viruses and antibiotics will not work
- Let your doctor decide if an antibiotic is needed and which antibiotic is best.
- Be patient when you (or your child) have cold symptoms, a cough or sore throat. Most viral illnesses will take 4 – 5 days before getting better and up to three weeks for a full recovery.
- Always wash your hands after being with someone who is ill.

If you would like more information on Antibiotic Resistant Organisms and our ARO Campaign, please contact the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit.

Brockville office: 1-800-660-5853 or (613) 345-5685

Smiths Falls office: (613) 283-2740

**or**

log onto the Health Unit web site: <http://www.healthunit.org>

## National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

*Submitted by Tawnya Boileau, Public Health Nurse*

October is breast cancer awareness month! Breast cancer is the most common female cancer and is the second leading cause of cancer death in women. In 2003, approximately 8000 women in Ontario will find out they have breast cancer and 2000 will eventually die from the disease (OBSP Breast Cancer Fact Sheet, 2003).



Two of the biggest risk factors for breast cancer are being a woman and increasing age. Unfortunately, there is no clear way to prevent breast cancer so early detection through screening is the best approach. Research shows that regular screening in women age 50-69 can reduce deaths from breast cancer by 30% (Central West group of Health Units, 2002).

During the month of October, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP) sites, in this area, are working together to deliver the 2003 Breast Health Campaign. Our plan is to reach women between the ages of 50-69, the partners or family of these women and physicians/health professionals.

### **Our objectives of the campaign are to:**

- Increase awareness of the need for early breast screening despite the absence of signs or symptoms.
- Increase awareness of the OBSP's process and the OBSP locations and phone numbers.
- Empower women to take charge of their own health.
- Reinforce the value of early detection and the effectiveness of the OBSP to physicians/health professionals.
- Increase recruitment to the OBSP.

### **Our plan to achieve these objectives is multi-strategic. The campaign will include:**

- Resource distribution to workplaces (including schools as a workplace), fitness centers, churches, pharmacies and all 5 health unit offices.
- Articles submitted to Health Briefs, Health Matters and the Physicians' Newsletter.
- Promotion of the campaign in the local media as well as on the Health Unit's website.

Look for the results of the campaign in a future issue of the Board of Health report.

