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Symptom-Free Pee: Let It Be
Curbing the use of antibiotics to treat asymptomatic bacteriuria

November 14, 2016 (Ottawa) Canada's infectious disease specialists are sounding the alarm over the unnecessary use of antibiotics to treat asymptomatic bacteriuria.

Asymptomatic bacteriuria is a condition in which bacteria are present in the urine of a patient who does not show any of the typical symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI). Older people, especially those in Long-Term Care facilities, are particularly prone to this condition.

It's estimated that up to 50% of the elderly have asymptomatic bacteriuria and, in 8 out of 10 cases, they are treated with antibiotics.

The Association of Medical Microbiology and Infection Disease (AMMI) Canada says health care professionals must curb the use of antibiotics for this condition because the practice is needlessly putting older patients at risk.

"Essentially asymptomatic bacteriuria in the elderly is not an infection and therefore does not require antibiotics." says Dr. Edith Blondel-Hill, a medical microbiologist and an infectious disease specialist with AMMI Canada.

"When we give antibiotics for asymptomatic bacteriuria we expose the elderly to serious side effects such as Clostridium difficile infections, possible interactions with their other medications and sometimes severe allergic reactions. But equally as important we help to promote antibiotic resistance, one of the biggest threats facing medicine today."

To underscore the significant risks of treating asymptomatic bacteriuria in long-term care residents with antibiotics, AMMI Canada is launching an awareness campaign to raise the profile of the problem.

The campaign – entitled *Symptom-Free Pee: Let It Be* - has a clear, concise and compelling message for health care providers.

"When an older person is not feeling well it is sometimes difficult to know exactly what is going on. Our campaign reminds nurses and doctors that asymptomatic bacteriuria is very common and to consider important factors such as dehydration before investigating and treating for urinary tract infection" says Blondel-Hill.

AMMI Canada has timed its initiative to coincide with the World Health Organization's Antibiotic Awareness Week, a global effort to promote the wise use of antibiotics.

A bilingual, easy-to-understand information package about the campaign is available on the AMMI Canada website at www.ammi.ca.

AMMI Canada (www.ammi.ca) is the national association representing physicians and researchers specializing in medical microbiology and infectious diseases. The association strives to reduce infectious disease deaths through education, research and advocacy.

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