

## Media Release

### Urgent need to tackle antibiotic resistance in New Zealand

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Deaths attributed to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) could be higher than deaths attributed to cancer in 35 years if no action is taken to address increasing rates of resistance, says The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (the RACP) and the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID).

Common infection-causing bacteria are developing resistance to available antibiotics. These standard treatments are becoming ineffective against common infections, increasing the risk of the infection spreading to others, and even death in the case of untreatable disease.

Dr Jonathan Christiansen, RACP NZ President, says antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a serious issue that is progressing very quickly in New Zealand.

“Even now, we have patients in our hospitals that are critically ill and we can’t easily treat them. This is going to become more and more common.”

An RACP viewpoint on AMR recently published in the *New Zealand Medical Journal* states urgent action is required to halt the progress of AMR.

“New Zealand needs to take action now to ensure that we have cures for infections in the future.” Dr Christiansen says.

“We need the government to lead a well-resourced program of antimicrobial stewardship, including guidelines on prescribing and appropriate use of antibiotics. We also need doctors and healthcare workers to strongly support good prescribing choices and make sure good infection prevention practices are in place.”

In collaboration with the RACP, and in the context of the worldwide “Choosing Wisely” movement, ASID has developed a list of the Top five low-value practices and interventions in the field of infectious diseases.

“The top three items on ASID’s list all relate to antibiotic use and overuse. This has been a serious concern among infectious diseases specialists for many years”, said Dr Kerry Read, Chair of ASID’s NZ Committee.

“Promoting the wise use of antimicrobials such as antibiotics, is a key part of effective antimicrobial stewardship.”

Antimicrobial stewardship is the topic of one of the sessions of ASID’s New Zealand Annual Meeting, the premier conference for specialists in the field, in Dunedin today.

“All New Zealanders can help by having good conversations with their doctors about whether they in fact need antibiotics for a particular condition.

“We can all help and we can all make a difference.” says Dr Christiansen.

## Ends

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**About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP):** The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. [www.racp.org.nz](http://www.racp.org.nz)

**About The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID):** The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases is the peak professional body for infectious diseases and microbiology in the region. Membership encompasses Infectious Diseases Physicians, Clinical Microbiologists, Scientists, Infection Control Practitioners, Public Health Physicians, Sexual Health Physicians, Veterinarians and others eminent in the field of infectious diseases.

### Further information:

- The RACP New Zealand: Antimicrobial resistance in New Zealand <https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/resources/new-zealand-resources>
- *TOP 5 Low-value practices and interventions*, Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases <https://www.asid.net.au/documents/item/1183>
- Review on Antimicrobial Resistance <https://amr-review.org/>
- World Health Organization [www.who.int/topics/antimicrobial\\_resistance/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/antimicrobial_resistance/en/)