

**Date: September 19, 2014**

**To: University Hospitals leadership**

**Subject: Support for avoiding the purchase of meat produced using non-therapeutic antibiotics for UH food services**

Antibiotic overuse contributes to increasing rates of antibiotic resistance in infectious organisms. This creates a growing challenge when treating patients who have infections that may be resistant to multiple drugs. Addressing this challenge is the mission of our systemwide antibiotic stewardship program at University Hospitals. Of note, President Obama on September 18, 2014 signed an executive order directing key federal departments and agencies to take steps to address the growing challenge of antibiotic resistance, and the administration is releasing a *National Strategy on Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria*. The directive includes calling on the FDA to take steps to limit the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion in animal agriculture.<sup>1</sup>

About 80% of antibiotics sold in the United States are used in animal agriculture, mostly for non-therapeutic purposes (such as growth promotion and routine prophylaxis in industrial agricultural settings).<sup>2</sup> Antibiotics used in animal agriculture are often closely related to antibiotics used for human therapy, and there is a growing body of evidence that links the overuse of antibiotics in agriculture to antibiotic resistance in human pathogens.<sup>3</sup> Consensus among independent experts and organizations, including the United States Institute of Medicine/National Academy of Science and the World Health Organization, supports the conclusion that agricultural antibiotic overuse contributes to clinically significant bacterial antibiotic resistance.<sup>4,5</sup> In addition, more than 300 organizations, including the American Medical Association, American Public Health Association, and Infectious Disease Society of America, strongly advocate ending the non-therapeutic use of antibiotics in agriculture.<sup>6,7</sup>

Non-therapeutic antibiotic use in agriculture was banned in Sweden in the 1980s, in Denmark in the 1990s, and in the European Union in 2006. Some data from Denmark demonstrate that a reduction in bacterial antibiotic resistance was achieved after non-therapeutic agricultural antibiotic use was banned.<sup>8</sup>

A growing number of US hospitals, schools, and other institutions are seeking to purchase meat produced without non-therapeutic antibiotic use.<sup>9,10</sup> UH's significant food purchasing power, especially when aligned with peers in healthcare, represents an important opportunity for us to advocate for improved antibiotic stewardship in agriculture. Our commitment to antibiotic stewardship should extend beyond our prescribing practices to our food purchasing practices.

**As clinical leaders of our antibiotic stewardship and infection control programs, we recommend that UH phase out the purchase of meat produced using non-therapeutic antibiotics.** We also support communication to internal and external

stakeholders about the public health importance of non-therapeutic-antibiotic-free meat purchasing.

We applaud UH's engagement in the Healthier Hospitals Initiative Healthier Food Challenge, whose outcomes support healthy and sustainable food purchasing that aligns with our organization's healthcare mission. In particular, we are encouraged by the fact that, as of this year, ground beef served at UH is now sourced from a supplier that uses no non-therapeutic antibiotics. We hope that we will build on this success by identifying additional opportunities to avoid purchasing meats produced with non-therapeutic antibiotics.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/18/fact-sheet-obama-administration-takes-actions-combat-antibiotic-resistan>

2. McKenna, Maryn (2010), "Farm Animals Get 80 Percent of Antibiotics Sold in U.S.," *Wired*, <http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2010/12/news-update-farm-animals-get-80-of-antibiotics-sold-in-us/>
3. For a complete annotated bibliography, see [http://www.keepantibioticsworking.com/new/KAfiles/64\\_2\\_107403.pdf](http://www.keepantibioticsworking.com/new/KAfiles/64_2_107403.pdf) (93 references).
  - 3a. One example: Bergeron, Catherine Racicot; Prussing, Catharine; Boerlin, Patrick; *et al.* (2012), "Chicken as Reservoir for Extraintestinal Pathogenic *Escherichia coli* in Humans, Canada," *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 415-421,
4. Institute of Medicine, Board on Global Health (2003). *Microbial Threats to Health: Emergence, Detection, and Response*, National Academy of Sciences Press, Washington, DC, <http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?isbn=030908864X>
5. Joint WHO/FAO/OIE Expert Workshop on Non-human Antimicrobial Usage and Antimicrobial Resistance, Geneva, 1-5 December 2003, <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/publications/micro/en/amr.pdf>
6. *Joint Statement on Antibiotic Resistance from 25 National Health Organizations and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (2012), [http://www.cddep.org/publications/joint\\_statement\\_antibiotic\\_resistance\\_us\\_centers\\_disease\\_control\\_and\\_prevention\\_cdc\\_and](http://www.cddep.org/publications/joint_statement_antibiotic_resistance_us_centers_disease_control_and_prevention_cdc_and)
7. Infectious Disease Society of America position on non-judicious use of antibiotics in agriculture: [http://www.idsociety.org/Agriculture\\_policy/](http://www.idsociety.org/Agriculture_policy/)
8. Agersø Y, Aarestrup FM. *Voluntary ban on cephalosporin use in Danish pig production has effectively reduced extended-spectrum cephalosporinase-producing Escherichia coli in slaughter pigs.* *J Antimicrob Chemother.* 2013 Mar;68(3):569-72.
9. *Balanced Menus, Best Practices, Health Care Without Harm*, <http://www.healthyfoodinhealthcare.org/balancedmenus.bestpractices.php>
10. "Chicago Public Schools Largest District to Serve Chicken Raised Without Antibiotics," Press Release for the Pew Charitable Trusts, Nov. 1, 2011, <http://www.pewhealth.org/news-room/press-releases/chicago-public-schools-largest-district-to-serve-chicken-raised-without-antibiotics-85899367477>