UWMC ANNOUNCES TRANSITION TO ANTIBIOTIC FREE PORK AND POULTRY

Seattle, WA. April 2, 2014.

The UWMC Food and Nutrition Department announced today that it has instituted a purchasing policy that will phase out the purchase of pork and poultry products that are raised with the use of non-therapeutic antibiotics. This comes in response to a rising incidence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and supports the Food and Nutrition Department's mission which is “to promote the health of the community by linking evidence-based nutrition to the healthy foods we serve and to the education we provide staff, patients, and the community,” said Charles Zielinski, MHSA, Director Food and Nutrition at the University of Washington Medical Center. “

THE USE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN ANIMALS

It is estimated that 80% of the antibiotics in the United States are given to agricultural animals and are used non-therapeutically in these animals to promote growth or to prevent diseases that result from animal overcrowding and unhygienic living conditions. Concern about the growing level of drug-resistant bacteria has led to the banning and reduction of sub-therapeutic use of antibiotics in food animals in many countries in the European Union and Canada. However, In the United States, this practice remains legal.

ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Antibiotic resistance is a global health concern that results in strains of organisms that do not respond to standard antibiotic treatment and can result in severe-life threatening illnesses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the use of non-therapeutic antibiotics in animal agriculture “contributes to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in food-producing animals. These resistant bacteria can contaminate the foods that come from those animals, and persons who consume these foods can develop antibiotic-resistant infections.” Antibiotic resistant bacteria can also be transmitted through the environment and water supply. Because of the link between antibiotic use in food-producing animals and the occurrence of antibiotic-resistant infections in humans, the UWMC Food and Nutrition purchasing policy aligns with the recommendations of the nation's scientific community including the CDC, the Food and Drug Administration and the World Health Organization and supports the health of UWMC patients, staff and community.

FOOD AND NUTRITION POLICY CHANGE SUPPORTS UWMC GOALS

Antibiotic resistance directly impacts patient care in the hospital setting due to the increasing number of hospital-acquired infections that are now caused by highly resistant bacteria. Dr. Pottinger, an Associate Professor in Infectious Diseases Medicine, an Associate Director for the ID Fellowship Program, and Director of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Program stated, “UW Medicine is committed to being the highest center of healing and wellness in the land.  We serve the people of five states, one third of the land mass of America.  They deserve the safest, highest quality
nutrition available. Food that's not only good for them but good for our species and our future on the planet.  Let's take a stand.  This may seem like a small step, but it is essential.  From here, we change the world.”