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Get Smart about Antibiotics Week

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Eau Claire, WI, November 17, 2016 – Each year in the United States, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics. At least 23,000 people die from these infections. Get Smart about Antibiotics Week is a time to raise awareness of antibiotic resistance and how to use antibiotics appropriately.

“Antibiotic resistance occurs when germs outsmart drugs. In other words, the bacteria become stronger than the antibiotics,” explains Dr. Janki Patel, infectious disease physician at Mayo Clinic Health System-Eau Claire, “Taking antibiotics incorrectly or when they are not needed is fueling an increase in drug-resistant bacteria. These drug-resistant bacteria cause infections that are more difficult, and sometimes even impossible, to treat.”

Eau Claire County healthcare professionals saw a need in the community to address resistant bacteria and the link to antibiotic use. As a result, the Eau Claire County Healthcare-associated Infection (HAI) Coalition formed. The coalition, which comprises healthcare professionals from local hospitals, clinics, long-term care, and public health meets monthly to work on ways to better prevent resistant bacteria. One of the coalition’s goals is to raise public awareness about the issue.

The Coalition urges community members to help prevent antibiotic resistance by following three main recommendations:

- **Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed.** If you have questions, ask your healthcare provider or a pharmacist.
- **Do not use an antibiotic you were given for one illness for another illness.** Different illnesses are caused by different types of germs – even if they cause the same symptoms. The current illness may require a different antibiotic.
- **Take “no” for an answer.** If your healthcare provider does not prescribe antibiotics, it may be because your illness is caused by a virus. A virus is a type of germ that cannot be killed with antibiotics.

“It’s concerning to think that the antibiotics that we depend on for everything from skin and sinus infections to life-threatening infections could no longer work,” states Paulette Magur, nursing supervisor at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department, “This is a community-wide issue that we need both patients and healthcare to work on together.”

For more information on antibiotic resistance and appropriate antibiotic use, see <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/community>

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