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Kuwait National Campaign for Proper Use of Antibiotics

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Campaigns for the judicious use of antibiotics have been found effectual in changing the prescribing behavior of doctors and knowledge and understanding about the uses of antibiotics by the public [1]. The Directorate of Infection Control in Kuwait organized and conducted the first National Campaign for the Proper Use of Antibiotics during the period 19–26 March, 2009, under the slogan ‘Wise use or lose’. The campaign vision was to rationalize antibiotic use in healthcare settings by 2014 while its mission was to promote this concept through awareness, education and adoption of best practices.

The campaign targeted doctors, patients and the public in government hospitals to raise awareness about the prudent use of antibiotics. This was achieved through a comprehensive program prepared by the campaign’s Scientific and Awareness Committee. Educational lectures and videos for doctors and pharmacists were presented by an experienced team. The doctors received promotional texts via short message service (SMS) urging them to use antibiotics wisely. They received educational booklets and were given leaflets for patients and their families. The leaflets included simplified information about the nature of antibiotics, indications and proper methods for use, and the self-limited nature of colds and flu. Large and medium-sized posters in hospital corridors, wards and patient areas were displayed.

We put into action the idea which relates the success of a campaign at the hospital level to the appropriate engagement of executives, clinicians, patients, and their families so that the campaign message can be translated by clinicians into best practices and by patients and their families as a change in concept about the use of antibiotics. At the community level, all infection control

teams as well as some volunteers set up a 1-day community awareness action in one of the largest shopping malls (The Avenues) with the following key messages: ‘Antibiotics kill bacteria not viruses’, ‘Bacteria learn from our mistakes’, ‘Keen on antibiotics! Use it wisely’, and others.

The campaign mobilized the media to cover the event and to be directly engaged in public education. Previous campaigns to improve antibiotic use in Europe [2] have targeted the population and employed techniques of mass media distribution. Advertisements about the campaign included newspapers’ reports, local TV and radio programs.

Our next step is: to repeat the campaign during 2011 for extended period; to cover the primary care centers; target the fast-growing private health care sector; and to call for an act of legislation for private hospitals to develop their individual guidelines concordant with the national antibiotic policy. Notably, the Ministry of Health endorsed the campaign as one of its annual programs for health promotion in Kuwait.

In conclusion, we believe that the success of the campaign was due to good preparation and developing the campaign materials based on scientific evidence.

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