

KEEP ANTIBIOTICS WORKING

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February 8, 2008

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Secretary Michael O. Leavitt
Room 615F
Hubert H. Humphrey Building
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Leavitt:

As you know, the FY 2008 appropriations bill for the Department's Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality ("AHRQ") includes \$5 million "for activities to reduce infections for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and related infections." I write to you on behalf of Keep Antibiotics Working, a coalition of health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups with more than nine million members. We are increasingly concerned about the failure of the FDA to adequately respond to the crisis of antimicrobial resistance related to veterinary drug use in the United States. In particular, we are concerned that the FDA is not pursuing the likelihood that U.S. livestock operations are a reservoir for MRSA and the FDA is not responding to NARMS data indicating the emergence in the United States of zoonotic bacteria resistant to cephalosporins.

Therefore, Keep Antibiotics Working urges you to direct AHRQ to use some of this money to have the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) examine whether or not one or more of the strains of MRSA that is infecting people is also present in pigs (and other livestock) in this country. If so, FDA also should determine whether the presence of MRSA in food animals is linked to the use in these animals of antibiotics that are also used to treat human infections. As explained in more detail in our enclosed recent letter to the FDA, recent scientific studies show that in Europe a strain of MRSA that is infecting people is also found in pigs and that this is more likely to occur when antibiotics are given to the pigs. Another recent study showed that in Canada one of the most common genotypes of MRSA infecting people in North America, USA100, is also present in pigs.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important public health matter.

Sincerely,



Richard R. Wood
Steering Committee Chair
Keep Antibiotics Working

cc: Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D., Commissioner, FDA
Julie Louise Gerberding, M.D., Director, CDC
Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D., Director, Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality;
The Honorable Tom Harkin, U.S. Senator

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