



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Evaluation of the Antibiotic Resistance Campaign

In February 2019, the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA) launched a national campaign across Gibraltar to reduce inappropriate prescriptions for antibiotics by raising awareness of the issue of antibiotic resistance and reducing demand from the public. There had been a number of incidents of multiple antibiotic resistant micro-organisms which were threatening the ability of the only hospital in the territory to function optimally. The public health campaign was aimed at all adults with a particular focus on groups most likely to use antibiotics.

Research shows that inappropriate prescribing is, in part, due to patients expecting or demanding antibiotics, without understanding whether they may be effective for their illness. The focus of this campaign was to address inappropriate patient pressure for antibiotics. The campaign involved advertising in the local press, including television and radio coverage.

The campaign aimed to:

- alert and inform the public to the issue of antimicrobial resistance in a way that they understand in a manner which they understand and increase recognition of personal risk of inappropriate usage;
- reduce public expectation for antibiotics by increasing understanding amongst patients about why they might not be given antibiotics, so reducing demand;
- to move patients to a better understanding that taking antibiotics when you do not need them means they are less likely to work for you in the future and to trust their doctors' advice regarding the best appropriate treatment for them.

There was an immediate reduction in prescriptions of antimicrobials of 19%, which eventually reduced to 26% and this has been maintained at this level for the duration of the 4-month campaign. The GHA is unable to monitor the amount of prescriptions taking place in the private sector but there is no reason to believe that this sector has not also experienced the same impact. Antimicrobial prescription is the 5th highest reason for prescribing in the GHA. Interestingly, the 19% reduction in prescriptions of antimicrobials was also mirrored with a 5% reduction in ALL prescriptions, from 116,000 to 110,000, which has also been sustained.



Dr Sohail Bhatti, Director of Public Health for Gibraltar said: “This campaign, which was a new departure for Gibraltar shows how a well targeted and focussed message presented in an engaging way can help all of us – public and professionals – to tackle a huge challenge for everyone in healthcare. I am delighted at the size of the reduction, and hope we can continue to keep close control over antibiotic prescribing.”

Minister for Health, Care and Justice, the Honourable Neil F. Costa MP added: “I am pleased with the results achieved following the campaign. Dr Bhatti and his team, supported by the GHA, have worked tirelessly to provide the public, as well as medical professionals in Gibraltar, with a better understanding of antimicrobial resistance and the dangers of using antibiotics inappropriately. This increased awareness will vitally assist in safeguarding our community against the risks associated with antimicrobial resistance. I would like to sincerely thank Dr Bhatti, the Public Health Team, and all GHA staff who have contributed towards this important campaign.”