
Introduction: progress in the development of a national antibiotic resistance management program

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Since the release of *The Commonwealth Government Response to the Report of the Joint Expert Technical Advisory Group on Antibiotic Resistance (JETACAR)* in October 2000, the government has continued its work toward the development of a national antibiotic resistance management program.¹¹³ Two committees were established to further this aim:

- The Expert Advisory Group for Antimicrobial Resistance (EAGAR), was set up in April 2001 under the auspices of the National Health and Medical Research Council, to provide continuing advice on antibiotic resistance and related matters; and
- The Commonwealth Interdepartmental JETACAR Implementation Group was established in November 2000, to oversee and coordinate the continuing government response to JETACAR, to respond to the policy advice received from EAGAR and to seek funding for implementation purposes.

During 2001, EAGAR developed and commenced the use of a protocol to assess the risk of antibiotic resistance developing in new and existing antibiotics.

Activities undertaken by the Commonwealth Interdepartmental JETACAR Implementation Group and its member agencies in 2001 include:

- an informal consultation meeting in March—The Monitoring of the Distribution of Antibiotics for Veterinary and Human Use in Australia; and
- the release in April of the draft report, *National surveillance of healthcare associated infection in Australia*, for consultation.

Other important activities included:

- the workshop on *Antibiotic Resistance Surveillance* (4 May);
- the *National Summit on Antibiotic Resistance* (30 and 31 May);
- a nationwide consultation toward *Development of a National Antibiotic Resistance Surveillance System for Antibiotic Resistance Management* (July to September); and
- the initiation of the EAGAR website—<http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/jetacar/eagar.htm>.

Progress reports on implementation of the Government Response are available on the implementing JETACAR website—<http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/strateg/jetacar/index.htm>.

Through the *National Summit on Antibiotic Resistance*, representatives from governments, health, agricultural, industry and consumer groups identified priorities for action. In particular, the need for the development of a national system of surveillance for antibiotics was recognised. This system will inform improvements in current practice and health outcomes, including:

- improved education and awareness, leading to more appropriate use of antibiotics;
- clearer research focuses, and better communication and regulation;
- more effective linkages between corporate and peak organisational bodies;
- measurable reductions in prevalence of antibiotic resistance; and
- reduced incidence of health care-associated infections in Australia.

The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—Australia and the Department of Health and Ageing undertook a collaborative consultation process to develop a national system of surveillance for antibiotic resistance.