

NCAS International Activities 2017

The National Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship (NCAS), an NHMRC-CRE, has been actively engaging in educational activities focused on antimicrobial stewardship (AMS), including several international ones this year. NCAS researchers have played a critical role in surveillance of antimicrobial use in Australia since 2011.

The National Antimicrobial Prescribing Survey (NAPS), an ongoing project endorsed and supported by the Australian Commission for Safety and Quality in Health Care, is now in its seventh year. The NAPS measures the quality of antimicrobial use in hospitals, and the program has been expanded to include projects on aged care (now in its third year) and surgical prophylaxis (in development).

The 2015-2016 Hospital NAPS report was published earlier this year, and the 2015-2016 Aged Care NAPS report is currently awaiting publication. The 2017 iterations of these surveys are now underway.

WHO Geneva: closing the education gaps

In March, Professor Karin Thursky, director of NCAS and Guidance, attended the WHO expert consultation meeting on health workforce education and antimicrobial resistance control in Geneva. The meeting brought together AMS and Infection Control (IC) experts from around the world to help inform initiatives to address gaps in clinical IC and AMS education. Experts presented on current workforce capacity and training in their jurisdictions, and helped identify areas of need and determine ways to enhance AMS education globally.

Aged care, posaconazole and an audit tool for surgical prophylaxis

NCAS fellows and Guidance staff presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) (22-25 April, Vienna) and the BMJ International Forum on Quality and Safety in Healthcare (26-28 April 2017, London, UK).

At ECCMID, pharmacist and NCAS PhD fellow Karen Urbancic presented a poster on treatment with posaconazole (an antifungal agent). At the BMJ forum, Guidance-VICNISS project officer Dr Noleen Bennett presented a poster on the results of the 2015-16 Aged care National Antimicrobial Prescribing Survey (AcNAPS), while pharmacist and NCAS PhD fellow Courtney Ierano presented two posters – the first on the implementability of surgical prophylaxis guidelines in Australia, and the second, with Dr Trisha Peel, an NCAS chief investigator and supervisor, on the development of a national audit tool for surgical prophylaxis.

Malaysia: strong progress but physician workforce challenges remain



Professor Karin Thursky and Associate Professor Kirsty Busing, director of Guidance and deputy director of NCAS, presented keynote lectures and workshops at a conference and educational summit in Malaysia from 16-20 May.

Presenting at the Malaysian Society of Infectious Diseases and Chemotherapy's Annual Scientific Meeting on Emerging Infectious Threats, as well as at workshops at the University of Malaya Medical Centre, Professor Thursky and Associate Professor Busing focused on AMS initiatives and challenges in Australia, and the potential for increased clinical capacity-building activities in the region.

They discussed surveillance of antimicrobial use and prescribing in healthcare facilities, with a focus on the experience of implementing the National Antimicrobial Prescribing Survey program. They also discussed AMS tools and clinical support systems, the implementation of AMS in hospitals, prescribing targets for hospital AMS programs, the challenges of implementing AMS (along with suggestions for improvement), measurement and audit of AMS programs, and the One Health approach to AMS. They participated in a panel to discuss practical issues in hospital AMS and strategies to turn clinical evidence into practice.

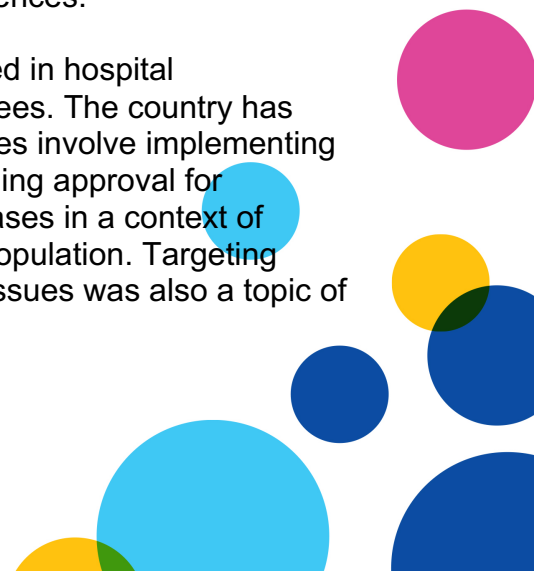
Professor Thursky was presented a foundation Infectious Diseases fellowship award by the Malaysian Medical Association in recognition of her contributions to the field.

Malaysia has a two-tiered healthcare system comprising 155 public hospitals, 115 private hospitals, three university hospitals, and a large number of private clinics.

There are approximately 30 Infectious Diseases (ID) physicians working in the public sector, five in the private sector, and six at the three university hospitals (five of whom are based at the largest university hospital, the University of Malaya). There are currently 13 trainees working at public hospitals and two at the University of Malaya. In addition to physicians, there is a growing number of pharmacists engaged in AMS activities across the country.

The Malaysian Society of Infectious Diseases and Chemotherapy has around 400 members from various disciplines, and organises annual conferences.

Much progress has been made in Malaysia. AMS is now included in hospital accreditation, and most hospitals are establishing AMS committees. The country has national antimicrobial prescribing guidelines. The main challenges involve implementing these guidelines, and developing sustainable systems for obtaining approval for restricted drug use and undertaking expert review of complex cases in a context of limited ID physician numbers and a very large hospital patient population. Targeting audits to find meaningful measurement and identify actionable issues was also a topic of considerable discussion.



RMH activities in Malaysia

The Royal Melbourne Hospital has a strong historical relationship with ID physicians in Malaysia, with many having spent time here as clinical registrars and research fellows over the past decade. This trip provided an opportunity to catch up with them and discuss their work.

Recently, NCAS has also provided AMS training to a hospital pharmacist from Malaysia. During her observership-sabbatical from November 2016 to May 2017, pharmacist Hoey Lin Oh learned about AMS tools and initiatives in Australia through hospital visits; consultations with ID physicians, pharmacists and other experts; attendance at seminars and presentations; and consultations with organisations such as Therapeutic Guidelines Limited. Alongside a range of professional development activities, Ms Oh undertook research to investigate the feasibility of introducing an IV to oral switch guideline at the Royal Melbourne Hospital, and presented on antimicrobial stewardship activities in Malaysia at an NCAS Journal Club seminar at the PDI.

WHO Asia-Pacific: assessing readiness for regional antimicrobial stewardship

This year's visit to Malaysia builds on previous engagement in capacity-building exercises in the region. In 2015-16, members of the NCAS-Guidance team undertook country-specific assessments in the region on behalf of the WHO. The team assessed and reported on antimicrobial use, healthcare resources, infection control in hospitals, and readiness for antimicrobial stewardship initiatives in Vietnam, Laos, the Philippines and Mongolia. These reports were provided to the WHO for guidance in developing regional capacity for infection control against the backdrop of the growing health burden posed by AMR in the region.

NCAS is interested in helping support regional capacity-building exercises through educational workshops, traineeships and collaboration with international colleagues.

By providing mentorship, advice and links to other institutions in Australia, as well as exploring opportunities for clinical and research collaboration, the centre hopes to help boost AMS research and capacity in the region.

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