

Proficient use of vaccines and antimicrobial drugs promotes health

The use of vaccines and antimicrobial drugs (antibiotics or antibacterial agents) has successfully reduced the mortality and frequency of infectious diseases also in Finland.

The goal of the national vaccination programme is to protect citizens as well as possible from diseases that are preventable through vaccination. Such vaccinations are voluntary and free of charge. The first vaccine adopted in Finland was against smallpox. The latest vaccine to be included in the vaccination programme is the HPV vaccine.

The national vaccination programme has focused on reducing infectious diseases among children. However, the number of elderly and infection-prone risk patients in our population is increasing. This is why it is also important that adults receive the appropriate vaccinations. What is more, it is extremely important that health care professionals be vaccinated against influenza in order to protect patients to whom influenza could be fatal.

However, as in the Pandemrix case, such drugs can also trigger adverse reactions. The article discussing the case (Lankinen, in Finnish) also describes the special circumstances in which official approval is granted for a vaccine against a pandemic disease.

Antimicrobial drugs can save the life of a patient suffering from an infection. On the other hand, these drugs too can cause adverse reactions, such as the problems associated with *Clostridium difficile*. Use of antimicrobial drugs is also associated with a risk that resistance will develop. For this reason, antibiotics should not be prescribed carelessly – caution is required.

Few people pause to consider how the prevention and treatment of infections in animals affect human health. For example, vaccination of animals is critically important to the prevention of rabies. Fortunately, in Finland antimicrobial drugs for animals are used with moderation, which also has an effect on the drug susceptibility of human pathogenic bacteria.

Each issue of Sic! also contains articles outside the theme of the issue. One such article in this issue describes the adverse reaction records of various drugs (Karonen, in Finnish). In some detail, it runs through the conclusions that cannot be drawn from the records in the national adverse drug reaction database.

We would be delighted to hear any suggestions you may have on the topics and themes of future issues! Please send your suggestions to sic@fimea.fi.

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