

Common colds need common sense, especially for our children...



National Prescribing Service Limited



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Background

The NPS antibiotics program is the only national strategy aimed at reducing the use of antibiotics for viral respiratory tract infections. We report here on one component of a multi-faceted intervention to reduce consumer expectations for antibiotics.

Parents and carers of children aged 2-9 years were the primary target of the intervention implemented in partnership with children's services.

Goal

To reduce the use of antibiotics and minimise the spread of viral respiratory tract infections among children, parents and carers of children aged 2-9 years, within children's services. Objectives were to change staff practice and sustain this change through changes to their service's health policy. Therefore, a primary outcome of interest was policy change.

Rationale

Child carers and parents place pressure directly through policies or indirectly through practice to:

- visit the doctor to legitimise the illness or
- require a child to be on a course of antibiotics before returning to the centre
- disallow a child's attendance in child-care based on the incorrect meaning of symptoms such as green nasal discharge interpreted as a more serious or severe cold.

Method

An interactive 'Common colds need common sense, not antibiotics' staff update was developed for staff and parents of children's services.

This presentation reinforced elements of the:

- NPS 'Common cold need common sense' campaign
- NHMRC 'Staying Healthy in Child Care; Preventing infectious diseases in child care' publication.

Volunteer health professionals such as GPs, pharmacists and nurses delivered many of these interactive staff updates locally using the prepared kits.

Reach and impact of the educational sessions were evaluated using a self-completed questionnaire.

Kits included:

- presenter's guide
- series of handouts
- Glo-germ hand washing kit
- USB stick containing the presentation



Campaign resources

This intervention was complemented and reinforced with four short articles to parents, posters and national media.

Newsletter articles



Posters and brochures



Storybooks for children



Results

Feedback was received for 1194 sessions (response rate of 50%).

- 1,813 staff attended these sessions
- 71% said that they have, or definitely will consider changing their health policies. Of the remaining respondents,
- 96% said that they are planning to review their policies.

Key messages

Targeted interventions can help to change local practice

Policy change will sustain this change



An independent, not-for-profit organisation for quality use of medicines, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing