

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 23, 2002

Contact: Sara Rolandson 916/658-0144  
916/716-4980  
[Sara@Perrycom.com](mailto:Sara@Perrycom.com)

### **Inappropriate Antibiotic Use Puts Teen in Hospital**

*Antibiotic resistance week reminds consumers about proper antibiotics use*

Sacramento, CA – The current hospitalization of a 19-year-old woman is a vivid example of the risks associated with taking unnecessary antibiotics -- an issue being highlighted this week as part of California's antibiotic resistance awareness week.

Judith Herren, from San Mateo, had been battling a cough for several weeks. She went to have it checked, was diagnosed with having a viral chest cough and sent home with antibiotics to treat it. "I noticed a poster in the doctor's office that said 'do not take antibiotics for viral infections, but I never questioned the doctor,'" said Herren. She landed in the emergency room a few days later with a severe fever, violent vomiting and a painful rash that ended up covering her from head to toe. "Judith experienced first hand the sometimes dangerous consequences of taking unnecessary antibiotics," said D. Scott Smith M.D., Chief of Infectious Disease and Geographic Medicine for Kaiser Hospital in Redwood City.

Herren informs consumers: "Don't be afraid to question your doctor. If you are told you have a viral infection, taking antibiotics can do more harm than good."

During antibiotic resistance awareness week and with cold and flu season right around the corner, AWARE (Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education) is reminding Californians about the proper use of antibiotics and how to stay healthy by taking a little advice rather than an antibiotic:

- Don't use antibiotics for viral infections. They are only effective for bacterial infections.
- Stay healthy! Wash your hands frequently and wipe hard surfaces like desks and tables with disinfectant cleaner everyday to kill most germs!
- Finish your antibiotic prescription even if you start to feel better.
- Never share or take leftover antibiotics.
- Never use antibiotics for a cold or the flu. They don't work!

The threat of totally resistant bacteria is very real. "Michigan recently reported the first confirmed case of a Staphylococcus aureus bug that was fully resistant to vancomycin. This is significant because Staphylococcus aureus is a common cause of infection in hospitalized patients, and vancomycin is often the only remaining antibiotic that is effective against it," said Jon Rosenberg M.D., Chief of Infectious Disease at California Department of Health Services. "California has seen a patient almost die from a paper cut infected with resistant bacteria, but so far vancomycin resistance infections have not surfaced in California. California needs to be proactive and reduce the misuse of antibiotics now."

"With 30% of Californians' infections resistant to penicillin, we are running out of effective medications," said Joe Silva M.D., Dean of the UC Davis School of Medicine. "Once the infections are resistance to an antibiotic, there is no turning back the clock."

Published reports estimate the costs of antibiotic resistance in the United States to be up to \$30 billion each year. Included in the unnecessary costs are additional medical visits, and treatments for side effects, allergic reactions or other complications common to antibiotics.

AWARE, a project initiated by the California Medical Association Foundation, is the largest alliance of its kind in the country and has been working to reduce antibiotic resistance in California for three years. This year AWARE will ship over 65,000 Clorox Disinfecting Wipes to schools throughout the state and distribute recommendations on how to reduce antibiotic resistance to members of LA Care Health Plan and the California Pharmacists Association. AWARE is also teaming up with the PTA and providing free educational kits for parents and children that are also available to the public online. These educational campaigns will reach almost 6 million Californians during this year's cold and flu season. As a leader in antibiotic resistance education, AWARE will be hosting a national antibiotic resistance conference in November. For more information on this conference and other AWARE materials go to [www.aware.md](http://www.aware.md).

*The California Medical Association Foundation initiated a long-term, statewide effort to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics called, Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education, or AWARE. AWARE is the largest and most diverse partnership of its kind in the country that includes physician organizations, healthcare providers, health systems, health plans, public health agencies, consumer and community based health organizations, federal, state and local government representatives and the pharmaceutical industry. More information about AWARE can be found by logging on to [www.AWARE.md](http://www.AWARE.md).*

# # #