



# Press Release

## ***On 18 November, the European Respiratory Society celebrates European Antibiotic Awareness Day***

**Lausanne, 18 November, 2008 – The European Respiratory Society, ERS**, an international medical society established in 1990 to promote better lung health through research and continued professional development for respiratory clinicians celebrates today the first-ever ***European Antibiotic Awareness Day***.

**European Antibiotic Awareness Day**, which will be organized annually by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), is an occasion for people around Europe to raise awareness about the risks associated with inappropriate use of antibiotics, and how to take antibiotics responsibly.

This year's theme, ***"Don't take antibiotics for colds and flu"*** sends an important message about that antibiotics do not work in the case of infections caused by viruses such as colds and flu.

Professor Giovanni Battista Migliori, Head of the ERS Respiratory Infections Assembly, stated *"Patterns of antibiotic resistance vary in Europe, and there is a strong linear correlation between resistance patterns and the different antibiotic prescription habits in general practice across Europe – which is what the EU-funded GRACE Network of Excellence demonstrated. Ultimately, the correct decision about whether antibiotics are necessary can only be made by seeking your doctor's advice."*

Professor Jorrit Gerritsen, ERS President, moreover declared *"Although antibiotic resistance has been well studied in general practice, very little is known about resistance patterns and treatment habits in hospital-admitted and elderly patients being cared for in nursing homes. Professor Tobias Welte is Head of the German Network of Community Acquired Pneumonia (CAP-NETZ), which has collected data from some 9.000 CAP patients in Germany most of whom had been admitted to hospital and in whom high mortality rates of up to 14% were seen. The extraordinary importance of CAP as the most likely fatal infectious disease worldwide calls for the establishment of a European research and surveillance network encompassing those who manage hospital and nursing home CAP patients. Such an investment is required in order to reduce morbidity and mortality."*

Antibiotic resistance is a key issue for the ERS since respiratory symptoms are the single most common reason for antibiotic use. The ERS promotes research in this field, and to this end provides tools and training materials for clinicians in the management of antibiotic resistance for different respiratory symptoms. With its membership-based expertise, ERS issues management and treatment guidelines intended for respiratory clinicians. The ERS also advocates the need for epidemiological and clinical research and data to be collected across Europe on respiratory diseases.



#### Other links :

<http://www.ers-education.org/pages/default.aspx?id=1352>

<http://www.ers-education.org/pages/default.aspx?id=1209>

[www.grace-edut.org](http://www.grace-edut.org)

To learn more about the ERS, the leading professional organisation for respiratory clinicians and scientists, please visit our website: [www.ersnet.org](http://www.ersnet.org)

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#### NOTES FOR EDITORS

##### **Antibiotic Resistance**

Antibiotics are drugs used for treating infections caused by bacteria. Also known as antimicrobial drugs, antibiotics have saved countless lives since their introduction more than 50 years ago. However misuse and overuse of these drugs, have contributed to antibiotic resistance in an ever increasing number of infections. Misuse of antibiotics includes insufficient dose and duration of treatment or wrong indication e.g. using antibiotics for viral infections. Although antibiotics kill bacteria, they are not effective against viral infections such as colds, most coughs, many types of sore throat, and influenza (flu).

##### **Community Acquired Pneumonia (CAP)**

Pneumonia is an inflammation of the lungs caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi and other microorganisms. They cause the small air sacs in the lungs to become filled with fluid produced by inflamed tissue. The severity of pneumonia depends on which organism is causing the infection. Common symptoms of pneumonia include cough, shortness of breath, fever and malaise. *Community-acquired pneumonia* (CAP) develops in people with limited or no contact with medical institutions or settings and has been transmitted within the community (i.e. outside the hospital). Antibiotics, antiviral drugs, or antifungal drugs are used depending on which organism doctors believe has caused the pneumonia.

##### **About the ERS**

The ERS is a not-for-profit international medical organisation composed of nearly 9000 individual members in over 100 countries who represent clinicians, chest physicians, allied health professionals in the field of

respiratory medicine across Europe and globally. It is the pre-eminent medical society in Europe in its field and represents the main forum for exchange and continuing education for medical doctors and scientists engaged in basic, translational and applied lung science in Europe and beyond. The mission of the ERS is to alleviate suffering from respiratory disease and to promote lung health through research, knowledge sharing, medical and public education and advocacy. This is accomplished by promoting basic, epidemiological and clinical respiratory research, collecting and disseminating scientific information, organising congresses and conferences, producing scientific publications, supporting training and continuous education in respiratory medicine and collaborating with organisations representing patients. For further information please visit our web site at: [www.ersnet.org](http://www.ersnet.org)