

Health ministry: Have strong policy to tackle antimicrobial resistance

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The government has already framed a comprehensive policy, namely, the National Policy for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance, to address the problem of multi-drug resistance due to widespread and indiscriminate use of antimicrobial / antibiotic drugs in the country. The policy was developed by a Task Force constituted under the chairmanship of director general of health services (DGHS) to address the problem. The policy is available on the web-site of the ministry of health and family welfare as revealed by its minister, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad in the Parliament on August 20, 2013.

The salient features of the policy are to review the current situation regarding manufacture, use and misuse of antibiotics in the country, recommend the design for creation of a national surveillance system for antibiotic resistance and to initiate studies documenting prescriptions patterns & establish a Monitoring system for the same. Besides that the enforcement and enhancement of regulatory provisions for use of antibiotics in human and veterinary and industrial use, also form the part of policy. Other features are to recommend specific intervention measures such as rational use of antibiotics and antibiotic policies in hospitals and diagnostic methods pertaining to antimicrobial resistance monitoring.

"Under the 12th five year plan, there is the target to initiate steps for the containment of antimicrobial resistance in the country through 30 lab networks and awareness activity for rational use of antibiotics. The aforesaid Task Force had also recommended insertion of a separate schedule under the Drugs & Cosmetics Rules to regulate the sale of antibiotics, especially 3rd and 4th generation antibiotics in the country," said the minister.

In pursuance of that recommendation, the government issued a draft notification GSR 228 (E) dated 20-03-2012 for inviting comments from the public proposing to insert a new schedule in the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 containing habit forming drugs and certain anti-TB drugs along with antibiotics. The container of the drugs covered under new schedule will be labelled with a symbol 'Rx' which shall be in red colour and conspicuously displayed on the left corner of the label with the warning - 'It is dangerous to take this prescription except in accordance with medical advice and not to be sold by retail without the prescription of the registered medical practitioner.'