

Contact: Liz Burdick
California Medical Association (CMA) Foundation
916.551.2886
lburdick@cmanet.org

California Medical Association Foundation Calls Attention to Inappropriate Antibiotic Use at News Conference Tuesday – Will Expand Education to More Ethnic Communities in California

October 15-19, 2007 has been declared Antibiotic Awareness week by Gov. Schwarzenegger to remind all Californians that antibiotic resistance is still one of our nation's most pressing public health issues.

The California Medical Association (CMA) Foundation held a news conference today to call attention to inappropriate antibiotic prescribing by physicians and use by patients that threatens the effectiveness of our most potent defense against serious bacteria and illness—antibiotics, and to discuss its expansion into more ethnic communities in California with more outreach and production of materials in multiple languages.

“We know that there is still a great deal of inappropriate antibiotic use, and we know that this use results in increased rates of bacterial resistance to these antibiotics,” said Dean Blumberg, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatric Infectious Diseases at UC Davis. “This means that all patients are at risk of becoming infected with a resistant strain of bacteria, increasing the chances of treatment failure and worse outcomes for infections.”

California’s antibiotic resistance levels have decreased over the past decade and are lower than national averages, but according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of bacteria resistant to antibiotics has increased overall in the last decade to the point that “nearly all significant bacterial infections in the world are becoming resistant to the most commonly prescribed antibiotic treatments”.

Because Latino communities represent a steadily growing segment of California’s population, the AWARE Project is developing an education campaign specifically targeted at bridging cultural and language barriers with Latino communities to ensure that all California residents are educated on the realities of antibiotic resistance. The pilot project, *Prevenir es Vivir* (Prevention is to Live), is a *Promotora* model project funded by CDC to employ a peer-to-peer education approach to reaching communities of color.

“The medical and public health professions have not done as good a job as possible to reach out to all communities to educate them on the importance of appropriate antibiotic use,” Dr. Blumberg said. “If educational opportunities are made available to all communities, it provides empowerment to take more responsibility for their health and improve the overall health within these communities.”

AWARE is also developing a Quality Improvement Initiative with partners from commercial health plans, Medi-Cal managed care health plans, California DHS and the Office of Patient Advocate. The goal of the Quality Improvement Initiative is to develop consistent messages about appropriate antibiotic prescribing and use for acute respiratory tract infections for all primary care physicians. Nearly 20,000 California physicians this fall will receive a comprehensive toolkit with clinical and patient education materials.

The Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education (AWARE), a project initiated in 2000 by the CMA Foundation, is the largest collaborative statewide effort to promote the appropriate use of antibiotics for upper respiratory tract infections. AWARE has developed several materials including a new clinical toolkit for physicians and patients about appropriate antibiotic use that includes the following guidelines:

- Don’t take antibiotics for viral infections like the common cold or flu (antibiotics only treat bacteria and have no effect on viruses).

- Complete you entire antibiotic as prescribed by your doctor (no 'leftovers').
- Don't share antibiotics with friends or family members.
- Don't demand that your doctor prescribe an antibiotic for your illness.

###

AWARE is the largest and most diverse partnership of its kind in the country that includes physician organizations, health care 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 at www.aware.md. The CMA Foundation serves as a link between physicians and their communities. The Foundation champions improved individual and community health through a partnership of leaders in medicine, related health professions, and the community.