**GPs feel pressurised to prescribe unnecessary antibiotics, survey finds**

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Many GPs feel under pressure to prescribe antibiotics even when they may not be the correct treatment, and some patients continue to expect antibiotics as a matter of right, two parallel surveys from the Longitude Prize charity have found.

The surveys of more than 1000 GPs and a similar number of patients were commissioned by Nesta, the organisation behind the £10m (€12.5m; $16.6m) Longitude Prize, which the public voted to award to finding smarter ways of using existing antibiotics, in the face of growing resistance and a dearth of new types.1

The survey of GPs found that 55% felt under pressure—mainly from patients—to prescribe antibiotics, even …

[J Fam Pract.](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11674887) 2001 Oct;50(10):853-8.

**Antibiotic use in acute respiratory infections and the ways patients pressure physicians for a prescription.**

[Scott JG](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Scott%20JG%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887)1, [Cohen D](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Cohen%20D%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887), [DiCicco-Bloom B](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=DiCicco-Bloom%20B%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887), [Orzano AJ](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Orzano%20AJ%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887), [Jaen CR](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Jaen%20CR%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887), [Crabtree BF](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Crabtree%20BF%5BAuthor%5D&cauthor=true&cauthor_uid=11674887).

[**Author information**](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11674887)

**Erratum in**

* J Fam Pract 2001 Dec;50(12):1077.

**Abstract**

**OBJECTIVE:**

We identified those aspects of physician-patient communication that influence physicians to prescribe antibiotics for respiratory infections.

**STUDY DESIGN:**

A multimethod comparative case study was performed including descriptive field notes of outpatient visits.

**POPULATION:**

We included patients (children and adults) and clinicians in 18 purposefully selected family practices in a midwestern state. A total of 298 outpatient visits for acute respiratory tract (ART) infections were selected for analysis from more than 1600 encounters observed.

**OUTCOMES MEASURED:**

Unnecessary antibiotic use and patterns of physician-patient communication were measured.

**RESULTS:**

Antibiotics were prescribed in 68% of the ART infection visits, and of those, 79% were determined to be unnecessary according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines. Patients were observed to pressure physicians for medication. The types of patterns identified were direct request, candidate diagnosis (a diagnosis suggested by the patient), implied candidate diagnosis (a set of symptoms specifically indexing a particular diagnosis), portraying severity of illness, appealing to life-world circumstances, and previous use of antibiotics. Also, clinicians were observed to rationalize their antibiotic prescriptions by reporting medically acceptable reasons and diagnoses to patients.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

Patients strongly influence the antibiotic prescribing of physicians by using a number of different behaviors. To decrease antibiotic use for ART infections, patients should be educated about the dangers and limited benefits of such use, and clinicians should consider appropriate responses to these different patient pressures to prescribe antibiotics.

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<http://www.gponline.com/nine-10-gps-report-pressure-pushy-patients-prescribe-antibiotics/infections-and-infestations/bacterial-infections/article/1308308>

Nine in 10 GPs report pressure from 'pushy' patients to prescribe antibiotics

By Stephen Robinson on the 19 August 2014[1 comment](http://www.gponline.com/nine-10-gps-report-pressure-pushy-patients-prescribe-antibiotics/infections-and-infestations/bacterial-infections/article/1308308#disqus_thread)

More than nine out of 10 GPs feel under pressure from 'pushy' patients to prescribe antibiotics even when there are doubts over whether the drugs are needed, according to a survey.

* Doctors Net[Discuss on Doctors.net.uk](http://www.doctors.net.uk/syndication/forum/gponline/gponlineforum.html?id=1308308)

Antibiotics: GPs under huge pressure to prescribe (Photo: Jason Heath Lancy)

The poll of 1,004 GPs found 93% had faced pressure to prescribe the drugs, with 44% admitting to having prescribed antibiotics simply to get the patient to leave the surgery on at least one occasion.

A quarter of GPs (24%) said they had prescribed antibiotics when unsure about medical necessity because of a lack of easy-to-use diagnostic tools.

The findings highlight the difficulties associated with reducing antibiotic use to tackle the problem of rising antibiotic resistance at a time of high demand on general practice.

The survey was organised by the charity Nesta, the organisation behind the £10m Longitude Prize, which was recently awarded to tackle antibiotics resistance following a public vote.

London GP Dr Rosemary Leonard said: 'These results show the pressure GPs face to prescribe antibiotics when they aren’t necessary, something I understand very well.

'The more antibiotics taken, the more resistant bacteria become to them. Antibiotic resistance is a real issue and more needs to be done to conserve antibiotics for the future. Diagnostics play a valuable role in making this happen. Not only can diagnostics help determine the type of infection someone has, they could gather valuable data and aid the global surveillance efforts.'

Tamar Ghosh, lead for the Longitude Prize, said: 'Across the globe we need accurate point-of-care diagnostic tools to maximise the chances that antibiotics are only used when medically necessary and that the right ones are selected to treat the condition. In the next five years, the Longitude Prize aims to find a cheap and effective diagnostic tool that can be used anywhere in the world.

'We recognise that stemming the misuse and overuse of antibiotics is just one piece of the jigsaw to slow bacterial resistance to antibiotics. Nevertheless it’s an important step when we could be waiting many years for other solutions, including novel alternatives to antibiotics coming to the market.'

The UK's CMO Professor Dame Sally Davies has [warned that growing resistance to antibiotics poses a 'catastrophic threat' to modern medicine](http://www.gponline.com/limit-antibiotic-use-combat-drug-resistance-gps-told/article/1188808). Last year the government launched [a five-year antimicrobial resistance strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-antimicrobial-resistance-strategy-2013-to-2018) to combat the problem.

<https://www.bva.co.uk/News-campaigns-and-policy/Newsroom/News-releases/9-in-10-vets-fear-antibiotic-resistance-means-they-won-t-be-able-to-treat-infections-in-pets/>

# 9 in 10 vets fear antibiotic resistance means they won’t be able to treat infections in pets

18 November 2014



Medicines used in veterinary practice

The scale of vets’ concerns about the threat of antibiotic resistance and what this could mean for their ability to treat infections in pets is revealed in figures released by the British Veterinary Association (BVA) today.  
91% of small animal vets are concerned that a consequence of antimicrobial resistance could be the inability to treat infections in pets, figures from BVA’s autumn 2014 Voice of the Veterinary Profession panel survey reveal. 78% of small animal vets are also concerned that antimicrobial resistance could affect their ability to control post-surgical infections.

The survey results are released to coincide with European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD) on Tuesday 18 November 2014.  Other statistics show:

* 9 out of 10 vets are concerned about antimicrobial resistance, with a third describing themselves as very concerned
* 72% of small animal vets cite poor owner compliance (such as not making sure a pet finishes a course of antibiotics or using antibiotics prescribed for one pet for another animal) as a main driver for antimicrobial resistance
* Almost 90% of small animal vets said they had come under pressure to prescribe drugs to pets from their clients
* 82% of small animal vets said their clients are not aware of antimicrobial resistance

Calling on pet owners to work with their vet to combat the threat of antimicrobial resistance, BVA President and veterinary surgeon John Blackwell said:

“The depth of our members concerns highlights the need for every  one of us to do the right thing and take responsibility for combating antimicrobial resistance for the good of both human and animal health. This means owners working with vets and understanding that in some circumstances antibiotics may not be required to treat their pets.

“We need pet owners to help us. Just as people are ever more aware that they should not go to the doctor’s surgery with the expectation that they will be prescribed antibiotics, we would ask pet owners to not automatically expect antibiotics when their pet is not well.

“We need to better inform pet owners about the risks of not following their vet’s instructions precisely when antibiotics are prescribed, particularly about what the consequences can be for using antibiotics prescribed for one pet on another. On European Antibiotic Awareness Day I would urge owners to read the excellent BVA leaflet for pet owners on their role in relation to antibiotics and to take the pledge to become an Antibiotic Guardian. We are particularly pleased that there is a special pledge for pet owners and I would urge all pet owners to make that pledge.

“We know that owners love their pets and will often think that a course of antibiotics will be the best thing to help their pets when they are ill. But the inappropriate use of antibiotics could mean that in the long-term the companion animals that mean so much to so many of us may be at risk of very serious and life-threatening infections with no ability to treat them.”

**Further information**

1) BVA’s second Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey ran from 17 September to 9 October 2014. 752 vets completed the survey.  
  
In relation to antimicrobial resistance, 358  small animal vets were asked:

a. How concerned are you about antimicrobial resistance?

* 90% were concerned or very concerned, with a third of that number being very concerned

b. In relation to animals and your work, how concerned are you about the following possible consequences of antimicrobial resistance?

* 91% were concerned with the inability to treat infection
* 92% were concerned with the enforced restriction on veterinary use of antimicrobials
* 78% were concerned with the inability to control post-surgical infections

c. In relation to animals, what do you feel are the main drivers of antimicrobial resistance?

* 72% identified poor owner compliance as a main driver
* 67% identified over prescribing as a main driver
* 57% identified lack of sensitivity testing as a main driver
* 54% identified client expectations (prescribing pressure) as a main driver
* 43% identified spread from human population as a main driver
* 17% identified poor biosecurity as a main driver
* 9% identified shortage of licensed products as a main driver

d. Generally, how aware do you feel clients are regarding antimicrobial resistance?

* 82% thought their clients were not very aware or not at all aware of antimicrobial resistance, with a fifth of that number thinking their clients were not at all aware

e. Do clients come to you with an expectation that you will provide antibiotics?

* 89% said that clients come to them with an expectation that antibiotics will be provided, with 36% saying this happened often

2) BVA’s Voice of the Veterinary Profession survey draws together a panel of over 1,000 BVA members broadly representative of the wider BVA membership who are surveyed on a semi-regular basis. The Voice of the Veterinary Profession captures the profession’s views and experiences by asking questions about animal health and welfare, public health and trends in the veterinary profession. The surveys are carried out by the independent research company, [Alpha Research](http://www.alpharesearch.co.uk/).

3) [European Antibiotic Awareness Day](http://ecdc.europa.eu/en/eaad/Pages/Home.aspx) is marked annually on 18 November. The European Antibiotic Awareness Day is an annual European public health initiative that takes place on 18 November to raise awareness about the threat to public health of antibiotic resistance and prudent antibiotic use. The latest data confirms that across the European Union the number of patients infected by resistant bacteria is increasing and that antibiotic resistance is a major threat to public health. The 2014 European Antibiotics Awareness Day focuses on self-medication with antibiotics.

### Related links

* [More information about becoming an Antibiotic Guardian](http://antibioticguardian.com/)
* [BVA’s leaflet on antibiotics for pet owners can be downloaded from](http://www.bva.co.uk/uploadedFiles/Content/News,_campaigns_and_policies/Policies/Medicines/Client_leaflet_5_-_antibiotics_-_your_role_as_a_pet_owner.pdf)