

Chinese ministry, WHO warn of antibiotic overuse

April 7 2011, By GILLIAN WONG , Associated Press

(AP) -- Drug-resistant forms of diseases such as tuberculosis are on the rise in China because of the overuse of antibiotics and urgent action is needed to reverse the problem, the Health Ministry and the World Health Organization warned Thursday.

Vice Health Minister Ma Xiaowei said at a ceremony to mark World Health Day that he hoped hospitals would push for antibiotics to be used in "scientific and rational" ways.

About 6.8 percent of tuberculosis cases in China are multiple-drug resistant, far higher than the 2 percent rate in most developed countries, said Dr. Michael O'Leary, the WHO's representative in China.

Antibiotics can spur infection-causing bacteria to become drug-resistant if they are overused. Drug-resistant tuberculosis can also arise when people take substandard medicines, a common problem in China. It takes longer to treat than regular TB and requires more expensive drugs, which also cause bad side effects such as [liver damage](#).

"Infections caused by resistant [microorganisms](#) often fail to respond to conventional treatment, resulting in prolonged illness and greater risk of death," O'Leary said.

He said that action was needed now because new drugs cannot be developed fast enough to replace the drugs that have lost their effectiveness.

A WHO statement said about 440,000 new cases of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis emerge around the world each year, causing at least 150,000 deaths.

The overuse of antibiotics is very common in China, often because it is a way for hospitals to boost revenue.

Antibiotics are also misused in the food industry, showing up in diverse parts of the [food chain](#) from farmed fish to honey.

Dr. Fabio Scano, a WHO medical officer with the TB program in China, said 50 percent of antibiotics used globally are misused on animals in food production. Scano said there's evidence that "the more antibiotics are used, the higher is the [antibiotic resistance](#) in humans."

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Chinese ministry, WHO warn of antibiotic overuse (2011, April 7) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-04-chinese-ministry-antibiotic-overuse.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.