

Simple guidelines decreased unnecessary antibiotic use in Quebec, Canada

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Antibiotic overuse and resistance have emerged as major threats during the past two decades. Following an outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* infections, which often result from antibiotic use, health care professionals in Quebec, Canada targeted physicians and pharmacists with an education campaign that reduced outpatient antibiotic use, according to a study published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* and now available [online](#).

The Quebec Minister of Health and the Quebec Medication Council collaborated with designated physicians and pharmacists to develop guidelines to improve prescribing practices. First issued in January 2005, the guidelines emphasized proper [antibiotic use](#), including not prescribing antibiotics when viral infections were suspected and selecting the shortest possible duration of treatment. Approximately 30,000 printed copies of the original recommendations were distributed to all physicians and pharmacists in Quebec. An additional 193,500 copies were downloaded from the Medication Council's website.

During the year after the guidelines were initially distributed, the number of outpatient [antibiotic prescriptions](#) in Quebec decreased 4.2 percent. In other Canadian provinces, the number of these prescriptions increased 6.5 percent during the same period.

According to study author Karl Weiss, MD, of the University of Montreal, "It is possible to decrease antibiotic consumption when physicians, pharmacists, state governments, etc., are working together

for a common goal. This is the key to success: having everybody involved and speaking with a common voice."

Dr. Weiss added, "Simple, short, easy-to-use guidelines have an impact on physicians when they are readily available. The web is an increasingly important tool to reach our audience and should now be used as such in the future. With handheld electronic devices available for all [health care professionals](#), these downloadable guidelines can be accessed and used at any time and any circumstance."

More information: The current versions of the guidelines are available online: <http://www.cdm.gouv.qc.ca/site/aid=166.phtml>

Provided by Infectious Diseases Society of America

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