

ANTIBACTERIAL RESISTANCE POSES MAJOR CHALLENGES IN MIDDLE EAST HOSPITALS

DUBAI: In the Middle East, MRSA can pose major challenges to healthcare systems due to commonly used antibiotics losing their effectiveness and certain safety issues and thereby limiting their use. MRSA has become an endemic in this region, and the burden and the difficulty in detecting imported strains are increasing. There is also an increasing risk of domestic and global transmission. MRSA in particular, has become a challenging healthcare problem leading to increased morbidity and mortality, and becoming a burden on healthcare systems and costs.

Dr Ashraf El Houfi, Consultant ICU Dubai Hospital, Examiner for The Royal College of Physicians, Lecturer in Dubai Medical College and Chairman of The Infection Control Committee Dubai Hospital commented saying "When an infection occurs, patients typically receive an antibiotic to kill the bacteria. However, over the past few decades, bacterial resistance to commonly used antibiotics has increased considerably.

The gram-positive bacterium *Staphylococcus Aureus* is the primary causative pathogen in skin and soft tissue infections. Acute bacterial skin and skin structure infections are complex and difficult-to-treat infections and can be associated with increased morbidity and mortality if not treated appropriately."

He continued to say, "Complicated skin infections can progress extremely rapidly in severity and so patients require prompt diagnosis and initiation of treatment is essential. Globally, approximately one in every five patients do not receive appropriate antibiotic therapy for MRSA skin infections." MRSA can spread rapidly among people having close contact with infected people. Also through indirect contact by touching objects i.e., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, and equipment contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA.

Further, patients in hospitals are more likely to contract an MRSA infection since the pathogen is often spread by healthcare staff due to insufficient

hygiene measures. It is crucial that certain hygiene rules are followed, particularly in the healthcare environment. This is one of the measures which the spread and infection rates of MRSA can be reduced. Therefore, it is essential that certain hygiene rules are followed, particularly in the healthcare environment. Simple measures such as hand washing with soap, and/or using an alcohol based hand rub, wearing gloves and a gown can help to prevent the spread of infection.

Enhancing infection prevention and control programs to contain healthcare acquired MRSA is important for both hospitals and community areas, along with appropriate measures designed to limit the spread and reduce the threat of MRSA carriage and infections. On the other hand Dr. Ayman AbdulAziz Ali head of ICU Department in Sharjah University Hospital said "Antibiotic stewardship is crucial to help contain the further development of the observed resistance and to help in preserving



Dr Phil Smits



Dr Ashraf El Houfi

antibiotics as future therapeutic resources. It is critical for countries in this region to establish both national and international initiatives to develop better measurements designed to limit and control the spread of infections."

Within the region, Bayer Middle East has a long standing commitment and ongoing dedication to contribute to the fight against increasing antibacterial resistance, in order to ensure that physicians have effective therapies available

and continue to treat patients. As a result of antibiotics becoming a scarce resource, both physicians and patients must use them carefully in order to maintain their usefulness. This is the time now, where the need for policies and regulations for antibiotic use at the country level must be developed as well, promoting the appropriate use of antibiotics, and increasing the awareness for both clinicians and the public on the rational and appropriate use of antibiotics.

WASTED GREEN POWER TESTS CHINA'S ENERGY LEADERSHIP

BEIJING: China's scramble to curb pollution has made it the world leader in renewable energy development, yet increasing amounts of that green power have gone unused as the country struggles to integrate wind and solar farms into an outdated and balkanized electricity network dominated by coal. The problem threatens to slow China's progress in clearing its air and controlling the greenhouse gas emissions that make it the top contributor to climate change.

It also could hamper any desire among Chinese leaders to fill the leadership gap left by President Donald Trump's move to withdraw the US from the Paris climate accord. As energy ministers from around the globe gather in Beijing this week to promote renewables, China's difficulty maximizing its green resources reflects the challenges they face over how best to transition to cleaner electricity. "They installed too much too fast," said Qiao Liming, China director for the Global Wind Energy Council.

"A real market should allow electricity to flow between two provinces. That is currently lacking" in China, she said. Thousands of new wind turbines and solar panels were installed in China's remote provinces over the past several years as the country's leaders sought to alleviate choking urban smog without slowing economic expansion. China now has more renewable power capacity than any other nation.

Two nagging problems have dampened that success, however, according to industry representatives and outside observers: China's sprawling power grid has been unable to handle the influx of new electricity from wind and solar, while some provincial officials have retained a preference for coal. In western China's Gansu province, 43 percent of energy from wind went unused in 2016, a phenomenon known in the energy industry as "curtailment." In the neighboring Xinjiang region, the curtailment figure was 38 percent and in northeast China's Jilin province it was 30 percent.

The nationwide figure, 17 percent, was described by Qiao's organization as "shockingly high" after increasing for several years in a row. The problem has shown some signs of improvement this year, according to the China Electricity Council. Power demand in general increased in the first

quarter, giving a boost to renewables after the economy regained momentum from 2016's slowdown.

However, experts say wasted energy will continue to be a drag on Chinese renewable power potential until the country's electrical grid is modernized and provincial officials end their preference for coal, which provides almost two-thirds of the country's energy. The problem is worst in winter, when many coal plants provide electricity for the power grid and send out excess heat to keep homes and businesses warm.

That's led provincial officials to keep coal plants running - and to reject available wind-generated electricity - despite pressure from the central government to use more renewables, said Lu Xi, a professor at Tsinghua University's School of Environment in Beijing. "On paper they express quite clear attitudes to promote renewables, but in reality they promote coal interests," said Frank Yu, a renewables specialist with the consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

To help address the issue, China's National Energy Administration has pushed for more wind turbines to be installed closer to Beijing and coastal cities, where demand is highest. That should allow renewable energy to bypass part of the dated transmission system that's been blamed for impeding its use. It also would give more populated provinces a greater stake in making sure renewables get used. In a separate effort, at this week's energy ministers meeting in Beijing, Chinese officials are expected to launch a campaign to make its power supply system more flexible. The goal is to create a power grid that can more easily absorb the highs and lows associated with weather-dependent wind and solar electricity, said Christian Zinglersen, the head of the Clean Energy Ministerial, which is hosting the meeting. Still, the problem of electricity going unused could get worse before it gets better, said Liutong Zhang, a senior manager with the Lantau Group, a Hong Kong-based energy consulting firm.

More solar and wind is planned in Chinese provinces that already have more power-generating capacity than they use. Additional coal plants also are slated to come online, Zhang said. China's difficulties, while more pronounced than in other countries, are not unique. —AP



MYANMAR: This file photo shows a vendor, left, attempting to sell a chunk of dried elephant skin and an ivory tusk at a traditional medicine shop in the sprawling grounds of Golden Rock pagoda in Mount Kyaikhteeyoe, a major religious pilgrimage site for Myanmar Buddhists.—AFP

SKIN CURE FAD DRIVING MYANMAR ELEPHANT POACHING SURGE: WWF

YANGON: Myanmar's wild elephants are being poached in record numbers with at least 20 killed this year due to surging demand for their hide, WWF said yesterday, warning the species is facing a "crisis". Hunters are increasingly targeting mothers and calves, using poisoned arrows to inflict a slow and agonizing death before stripping them of their skin, the wildlife group said. At least 20 elephant corpses have been found stripped of their skin in two sites the wildlife NGO monitors so far in 2017 — more than are usually killed in a whole year.

Global wildlife law enforcement specialist Rohit Singh said poaching at the Bago Yoma and the Irrawaddy Delta sites, both in the south, had reached crisis point. "If the current trend continues then you're going to lose the wild elephant population (in these areas) in the next 1-2 years,"

he said. "The sex ratio was already screwed up so any more pressure on young or breeding females will have serious, serious implications." Elephant skin has become one of the latest animal products to be touted by some as having medical properties, although there is no scientific support for those claims.

WWF estimates there are 1,400-2,000 elephants roaming wild in Myanmar, thought to be the second-largest population in Southeast Asia after Thailand. But their numbers have dwindled as Myanmar has emerged as a key hub in the \$20 billion a year global wildlife trafficking trade. Myanmar's government said in January that elephant poaching has jumped tenfold in recent years, driven by growing demand for skin and body parts used in traditional medicine.

AFP reporters who visited a wildlife market

hidden behind Myanmar's famed "Golden Rock" pilgrimage site earlier this year saw chunks of the hide on sale for a few dollars a square inch. Vendors promised that a paste made of its ash and coconut oil would cure eczema, while ground up elephant teeth would smooth and whiten skin. But experts say the majority of elephant products go to feed neighboring China's insatiable taste for exotic animals.

Much of the trade runs through the country's lawless eastern periphery, controlled by a sophisticated criminal network who are thought to be armed and funded by powerful "kingpins" in China. "It's organized crime, so we are dealing with organized criminal gangs," said Singh, adding that WWF was working with local communities and government to try to clamp down on poaching.—AFP

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