

Antibiotics Intake - The right way

Why in news?

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The BMJ, a journal of the British Medical Association published an article suggesting that completing the full antibiotic course is no longer necessary.

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What completing full course is recommended?

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- World Health Organisation (WHO) has recommended that patients must complete their entire course of antibiotics even when the patient seems to have apparently recovered.

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- This is because the disease causing pathogen might just have been put to a vegetative state by the initial dosages while complete annihilation might not have been achieved.

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- Discontinuing the dosage midway could lead to the development of drug-resistant traits among pathogens.

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- Discontinuing medication mid-course has been recognized as the main reason why drug-resistant TB strains have emerged.

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What are the dissenting voices to the WHO recommendations?

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- BMJ's article says that, WHO's advice on proper drug use is not evidence-based and is incorrect.

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- The BMJ is of the view that completing the antibiotic course is no longer necessary.

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- It also made a strong case for carrying out research in shorter antibiotic courses, it also opines.

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- Other experts were also of the view that stopping antibiotics early will not promote resistance in the case of common bacterial infections, though stopping medication halfway when the patient feels better may not guarantee cure.

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What are the issues with this article?

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- It has not made an evidence based claim.

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- Instead of addressing the weakness in WHO's contention, the article perpetuates a wage idea that it's safe to stop antibiotics when patients feel better.

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- The article has failed to clarify that its suggestion is restricted to common bacterial infections.

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- Hence it leaves wide scope for misinterpretation.

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What is the way forward?

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- Proved shorter antibiotic courses are already available for certain bacterial infections.

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- More shorter courses need to be developed though further research.

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- Meanwhile, Antibiotics misuse, such as inappropriate use (for viral infections), over medication, self-medication should be discouraged.

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Source: The Hindu

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