



Flinders Medical Centre's Infectious Disease Physician Dr Santosh Daniel is the Chair of Southern Adelaide Local Health Network Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee.

## Experts warn against overuse of antibiotics

Antibiotics have transformed the practice of medicine, making once lethal infections treatable and medical advances a reality. *Southern Health News* spoke to Flinders Medical Centre's Infectious Disease Physician Dr **Santosh Daniel** about why antibiotics need to be handled with care.

The use of antibiotics was front and centre for Antibiotic Awareness Week (14-20 November 2016), which seeks to educate hospital staff to think before they prescribe and for the community to resist antibiotics for common colds and other viral infections.

Dr Daniel, who also chairs the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee, said while the use of antibiotics to treat infections had proven to reduce disease and save lives, especially in the management of sepsis, around 50 per cent of all antibiotics prescribed in acute care hospitals are deemed to be either unnecessary or inappropriate.

"The misuse of antibiotics has also contributed to the growing problem of antibiotic resistance, which has become one of the most serious and growing threats to public health," Dr Daniel said.

Antimicrobial resistance has been recognised as a real threat worldwide and the World Health Organisation is predicting it to result in more than 10 million additional deaths by 2050. Australia's consumption of antibiotics is among the highest in the developed world.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that hospital based programs dedicated to improving antibiotic use, commonly referred to as Antimicrobial Stewardship Programs, can both optimise the treatment of infections and reduce adverse patient outcomes associated with antibiotic use.

Dr Daniel said the Antimicrobial Stewardship program was designed to help clinicians improve the quality of patient care and improve patient safety.

"SALHN's Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee is committed to careful use of antibiotics with an aim of preventing increased antimicrobial resistance, by a process of education, collaboration and leadership," he said.

"We use a team approach to this complex problem, which has significant impacts on patient safety, morbidity, mortality, length of hospital stay and increasing costs to the health system and the community.

"SALHN is unlike other regions, as it has three hospitals of different sizes and complexities and the Committee through innovative programs has catered to the needs of the Repatriation General Hospital, Noarlunga Hospital and Flinders Medical Centre.

"We have not restricted ourselves within hospital walls and have stepped out to engage medical students and general practitioners who prescribe 70 per cent of the antibiotics in Australia. In a very short time we have established ourselves as a no-nonsense quality team that is patient focused and staff friendly.

"The ultimate aim is to preserve antimicrobials for future generations."

SALHN's Antimicrobial Stewardship Program was the winner of the Excellence in Clinical Quality category at the 2016 SALHN Excellence Awards.