

'Superbug reports exaggerated'

Staff Reporter

KOCHI: The reports of superbug NDM-1 or New Delhi metallo-beta-lactamase are more political than scientific as medical experts the world over have been in the know of the existence of over 100 strains of the bacteria that resist carbapenems, the antibiotic used in treating the highest level of infections.

Medical professionals here said that while hospitals need to follow a strict practice of infection control and keep the hospital procedure environments aseptic to check hospital-acquired infections, naming a bacteria after the country's capital is only a technical matter.

Addressing queries on the superbug at a press meet, Prem Nair, medical director, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences, said the government needs to come up with a national infection control policy that would strictly monitor the use of antibiotics and infection-control proce-

Medical expert says people should not use antibiotics unless prescribed by a doctor.

dures in hospitals. A concept paper on the issue is said to be with the Union Health Ministry.

He said the general public should also desist from using antibiotics unless prescribed by a doctor. There should be controls on the sale of antibiotics over the counter, said Dr. Nair.

Anil Kumar, microbiologist at Amrita, said the infection by the bacteria identified included those of patients who took treatment in India as well as elsewhere. It is likely that further studies in this would report the same strain of bacteria from other places too. As the study that names the bacteria is rather recent, there is little medical literature available as of now.

Calling attention to the infections caused by multi-drug resistant bacteria, Sanjeev Singh, head of the department of infection control, Amrita, said the department had a data collection mechanism to identify various bacteria in different places in the hospital and the focus is on multi-disciplinary training in maintaining an antibiotics policy.

Referring to the superbugs as something that every tertiary hospital in the country has known for about one-and-a-half-years, Mohan Mathew, head of critical care, Lakeshore Hospital, said that ICU infections had become resistant to carbapenems and the misuse of antibiotics is largely to blame.

Patients come in with high resistance to antibiotics acquired in hospitals (termed noscomial infections). "We use techniques to prevent drug resistance and the first step is to de-escalate the drug given to a patient", said Dr. Mathew.