

## 'Curbs on antibiotics sale may be detrimental'

TNN | Nov 4, 2018, 06:16 IST



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There are instances where even one-time prescription of antibiotics has led to side-effects, said Arjun Srinivasan. Read More

KOCHI: Arjun Srinivasan, medical officer with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, was in Kochi to attend the two-day antibiotic stewardship and infectious disease conference "No action today, no cure tomorrow", organized by Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences. He talked to Preetu Nair on why we are never prepared for the end of the antibiotic era and what is the road ahead.

Are we late in talking about antibiotic resistance and the means to prevent it?

It is never too late. New type of antibiotic resistance threat will be there from time to time. The challenge is antibiotic resistance is a multifactorial problem and you have to continue to work as a state, a country and a community.

Has the time come for us to think beyond antibiotics? Has any research/human trials started?

Yes. It would be great to have something other than the traditional antibiotics. There is some work happening in that direction. But nothing really concrete has come out. It will be many years before we get into clinical trial of non-antibiotic content.

Any medicine has a certain life. Why we were not prepared to face this?

We have been under this false impression that once we develop resistance to a certain antibiotic, we will come out with an alternative medicine. But the resistance continued to rise at a much faster pace than developing new variants of antibiotics.

When did this shift (slow down on development front) really happen?

Developing of new medicines began to slow down nearly 20 to 30 years ago. Now, it is increasing slowly. There was a very long period when there were very few new antibiotics available in the market. There are couple of reasons, primarily because pharmaceutical companies felt that such drugs were not making enough money and they shifted their research to other areas.

How many years of misuse of antibiotics can put you in trouble?

There are instances where even one-time prescription of antibiotics has caused side-effects.

In a country like ours, where access to healthcare is not always easy, is just spreading awareness about antibiotic resistance enough or do we need to have stringent laws in place?

Here, people don't have easy access to a medical provider. So enforcing any law that bans sale of antibiotics without prescription can actually prove to be detrimental. someone, who would have survived, might succumb to infections. It should be a balanced approach, between access and excessive use.

What lessons should Kerala learn from the West?

The solutions for most problems are available at home. So, sometimes adopting western practices could be a mistake.