

Misuse of powerful antibiotics carries risk of dangerous side effects and resistance

By ACSH Staff — September 12, 2012

In the U.S., drug-resistant infections, including MRSA and *C. difficile*, are reaching crisis proportions, and the inappropriate use of antibiotics is at least partly to blame. In an effort to contain the problem, public health officials are encouraging doctors more strongly than ever to prescribe antibiotics with greater caution. Now, a new [article](#) [1] in The New York Times takes a closer look at the adverse consequences that may result from the misuse of antibiotics, with a specific focus on Levaquin, a widely-prescribed drug in a class of antibiotics known as fluoroquinolones.

Used to treat serious conditions such as pneumonia, chlamydia, and some skin infections, Levaquin was the best selling antibiotic in the U.S. in 2010. Often, however, doctors are prescribing the drug for milder ailments, such as sinusitis and earaches, which may clear on their own or are caused by viruses that don't respond to antibiotic treatments.

Furthermore, such inappropriate use of fluoroquinolones is not without its own slew of serious side effects, which may include acute kidney failure or retinal detachment. Yet perhaps even more troubling is that the rising use of these antibiotics has been in part responsible for the increase in hard-to-treat infections. According to the results of one study, fluoroquinolones were responsible for 55 percent of *C. difficile* infections in one hospital in Quebec.

The CDC has already expressed concern that physicians are too often prescribing these antibiotics as a one size fits all remedy without considering whether they were appropriate to each patient.

For yet another angle on the current antibiotics dilemma, you can take a look at this recent [op-ed](#) [2] by ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom.

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