MEDIA RELEASE: ASID and ACIPC support FDA ruling on over-the-counter antibacterial soaps

For immediate release

The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) and the Australasian College for Infection Prevention and Control (ACIPC) welcome the decision made by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to at this time end the sale of over-the-counter (OTC) antibacterial hand and body washing products containing 19 specific antimicrobial substances including triclosan in the United States of America.

The FDA ban relates to commercially available products for domestic (home) use, not to antibacterial hand wash products used in hospitals.

In 2013, the FDA investigated the efficacy and safety of OTC antibacterial soaps for home use and concluded that there is little evidence to prove that these antibacterial hand washes are better at preventing illness in the community than simply washing with plain soap and water and the benefit of using these products in the home does not outweigh the safety risks.

Additionally, ASID President Cheryl Jones says “the FDA has put a stop to the sale of these products for domestic use because there are concerns that use of these products over a long period of time could encourage the emergence of drug resistant-bacteria, causing hospital products, such as antibiotics, to become ineffective.”

ACIPC President Ramon Shaban says that “we must consider every measure to slow the rate of antimicrobial resistance. Reducing the unnecessary use of such agents, in this case in products that are not used in clinical settings, is an important aspect of our collective efforts.”

Hand Hygiene Australia Director Prof Lindsay Grayson says “Although this ruling relates to over-the-counter consumer products used in the community in the US rather than products used in Australian health care, the directive is consistent with the National Hand Hygiene Initiative recommendations in Australia.”

ACIPC President Ramon Shaban and ASID President Cheryl Jones have indicated that ACIPC and ASID strongly endorse the National Hand Hygiene initiative and would be happy to work with national regulators to introduce a similar ruling in Australia.

ASID President Cheryl Jones says “We can achieve adequate hand hygiene at home with plain soap and water, and there is no need to take the health risks associated with the use of antibacterial soaps.”

ENDS

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About ASID
The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases is the peak professional body for infectious diseases and microbiology in the region. Membership encompasses Infectious Diseases Physicians, Clinical Microbiologists, Scientists, Infection Control Practitioners, Public Health Physicians, Sexual Health Physicians, Veterinarians and others eminent in the field of infectious diseases.

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About ACIPC
ACIPC is the peak body for Infection Prevention and Control in the Australasian region. The College supports infection prevention and control professionals by providing them with support, networking, knowledge and up to date information relevant to their area of practice. This statement is authorized by the ACIPC Board of Directors. www.acipc.org.au

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Further resources:
Hand Hygiene Australia
FDA Final Rule
FDA News Release
FDA Consumer Update