For Immediate release

Media Release

ASID calls for a National Drug Shortage Strategy to prevent patient suffering and development of antibiotic-resistant infections

The Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (ASID) is calling for a National Strategy to ensure hospitals are best equipped during periods of insufficient drug supplies.

In December 2016, there was a significant shortage of three important antibiotics in Australia, forcing hospitals to ration treatments or prescribe less suitable antibiotics. Many hospitals were not notified of a lack of supply until the drugs were out of stock, making shortages even harder to manage.

ASID President Professor Cheryl Jones says “Antibiotic shortages are a major problem worldwide and drug supplies have been fluctuating in Australia for the past few years. We must create a strategy to ensure hospitals are best equipped to deal with any future shortages, so the lives and health of patients are not threatened.”

Senior Infectious Disease doctors, Prof Allen Cheng and Dr Celia Cooper, will be discussing their experiences of drug shortages, and the implications to patients, at ASID’s Annual Scientific Meeting on 30 March 2017.

Dr Cooper of the Women’s and Children’s Hospital says “Antibiotic shortages have the capacity to impact significantly on patient outcomes especially if the shortage involves an antibiotic that is the only treatment for a serious infection. Paradoxically, antibiotic shortages can drive antibiotic resistance, as the only antibiotics available for use may be very broad spectrum, meaning the antibiotics that we normally like to keep in reserve for special circumstances and not everyday treatment.”

Antibiotics play a significant part in a wider drug supply problem, with shortages of chemotherapy and pain killers also challenging medical staff. A shortage of drugs can be life threatening for critically ill patients.

Prof Cheng of the Alfred Hospital says “There is a broader issue for timely access to essential drugs required for seriously ill patients, including a continuous supply of commonly used antibiotics, but also less frequently used antibiotics, vaccines and antitoxins.”

*****ENDS*****

INTERVIEWS AND PHOTOS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

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Prof Cheryl Jones is the ASID President, Stevenson Professor of Paediatrics and Head of Department at the University of Melbourne, and Infectious Diseases Consultant at the Royal Children's Hospital.

Dr Celia Cooper
Site Clinical Director of Pathology and Head of Infectious Diseases, SA Pathology at the Women’s and Children’s Hospital.

Prof Allen Cheng
Prof Allen Cheng is an Infectious Diseases Physician at Alfred Health and Professor of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology at Monash University.

About the Australasian Society for Infectious Diseases (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.

About the ASID Annual Scientific Meeting

Prof Cheng and Dr Cooper will be speaking during the Drug Availability Symposium on 30 March 2017. The ASID Annual Scientific Meeting is the leading Australasian meeting for adult and paediatric infectious disease and clinical microbiology specialists. The conference is an ideal opportunity for connecting clinicians, microbiologists and other health professions with a common interest in infectious diseases, and provides a friendly forum for the exchange of scientific advances in the prevention, diagnosis and management of clinical infectious diseases. International speakers offer expert global perspectives, and Australasian research and expertise is highlighted with keynote lectures, proffered papers, symposia and educational workshops.