Audio conference of the HSC on vaccine shortages and AMR

15 April 2016 - 11:00 to 12:30 (CET)

Flash report

Meeting objectives

- The European Commission convened an audio meeting of the Health Security Committee (HSC) in order to: update the Committee on the current situation and discussions at expert level on options for action to address vaccine shortages; and to consider a rapid risk assessment produced by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) on carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae and other activities on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Vaccine shortages

- The HSC reviewed an updated rapid risk assessment produced by ECDC on shortage of acellular pertussis-containing vaccines and impact on immunisation programmes in the EU/EEA which concludes that in face of current vaccine shortages, priority should be given to the preservation of the infant primary immunisation schedule and for those in contact with the most vulnerable. Also it recommended the use of alternative vaccines, with appropriate monitoring of safety and effectiveness, rather than changing vaccination policies.
- The Commission updated the HSC on the findings of a discussion at expert level as regards possible measures to be taken to mitigate the impact of vaccine shortages, including regulatory clarifications under the existing pharmaceutical legislation, standard operating procedures to exchange medical countermeasures to strengthen mutual assistance in case of shortages or an emergency, work related to vaccine demand forecasting and vaccine research and development priority setting, or a review of the management of vaccine procurements. SANTE proposed to continue the discussion at expert level to further develop the options for action and the draft concept paper on vaccine shortages accordingly. SANTE will invite to a further ad hoc expert meeting on vaccine shortages to take place in May/June, involving representatives from Vaccines Europe as appropriate.

Antimicrobial resistance

- The European Commission updated the HSC on current activities on AMR including: a Eurobarometer on AMR which is in progress; the evaluation report on the implementation of the EU action plan on AMR which is expected soon and EU guidelines on the prudent use of antimicrobials in human medicine. The Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (SANTE) has asked ECDC to carry out preparatory work to support the development of these guidelines –
which will complement the EU guidelines on prudent use in veterinary medicine that were published last year. SANTE will invite all HSC members as well as key stakeholders to a scoping meeting on the guidelines to take place in Luxembourg on 25 May.

- The HSC reviewed a rapid risk assessment produced by the ECDC on carbapenem resistant Enterobactericaceae which concludes that carbapenem resistant Enterobactericaceae pose a significant threat to human health and health systems in all EU/EEA Member States. Options for action include: timely and appropriate laboratory investigation and reporting of carbapenem resistant Enterobactericaceae infection; a high standard of infection control in hospitals and healthcare settings; screening of patients who have been hospitalised or have stayed or travelled in countries or regions with a high carbapenem resistant Enterobactericaceae prevalence; enhanced infection control in hospitals for patients who are known to be carbapenem resistant Enterobactericaceae positive; antimicrobial stewardship programmes; prudent use of antimicrobials in animals; and improvements in surveillance and information sharing between national public health authorities in the EU and worldwide.

- The HSC received an update on the forthcoming Joint Action on Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare associated infection which aims to support the development and implementation of national strategies and action plans on AMR through collaborative activities across the EU. The Joint Action activities will be decided on and carried out by competent authorities designated by Member States. It will be co-funded by EUR 4 million from the EU health programme. CHAFEA will convene a meeting on 5 July to assist interested Member States to prepare for the Joint Action.

Other business

- The Chair reminded members that a Joint Action on HIV AIDS is also under development. A discussion on this Joint Action will take place in the HIV AIDS think tank.
- Nominations have been received for an HSC working group on Zika virus. SANTE will circulate information about the first meeting of the working group shortly.