JUST SAY “NO” TO FLOUROQUINOLONES

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Background: Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported notifiable disease in the United States, with Louisiana ranking second in the nation for 2007. Increases in fluoroquinolone resistant Neisseria Gonorrhoeae have led to changes in national guidelines set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which now limit the recommended treatment of gonorrhea to a single class of drugs, the cephalosporins (April 2007). The combinations of a lack of treatment options and increases in antibiotic resistance have reinforced the need to ensure all health care providers adhere to these recommendations. The objective of this study was to evaluate Louisiana providers’ adherence to the revised guidelines for treatment of gonorrhea.

Methods: The state of Louisiana notifiable disease databank was used to collect treatment modalities for the time period just prior to and immediately following the new recommendations, January 2007 through March 2009. Only provider specific (non-public health facility) data regarding number of patients, treatment with either a fluoroquinolone or cephalosporin antibiotic and treatment date were obtained. All cases were lab-confirmed either by the reporting facility or an independent laboratory.

Results: During this time a total of 3,546 patient records were examined. Prior to the release of the new recommendations, 20% of patients were treated with a fluoroquinolone, while 55% were treated with a cephalosporin antibiotic. After the guidelines were released, use of fluoroquinolones dropped by 40% in the remaining months of 2007, and steadily declined to just over 8% through March 2009.

Conclusion: The study showed that close to 61% of patients with gonorrhea were treated appropriately with cephalosporin antibiotics. Fluoroquinolones are still being prescribed for the treatment of gonorrhea by a minority of Louisiana health care providers. A letter campaign has been initiated to heighten awareness and address the growing urgency of this serious health concern.