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## Virginia Health Care Community Supports 'Be Antibiotics Aware' Initiative

*The Virginia Department of Health, Medical Society of Virginia, Health Quality Innovators, and Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association Partner to Raise Awareness about Responsible, Appropriate Antibiotic Prescribing and Use in Conjunction with U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week*

**RICHMOND, VA** – The week of November 13-19 is U.S. Antibiotic Awareness Week, and members of Virginia's health care community, including the Virginia Department of Health, the Medical Society of Virginia, Health Quality Innovators, and the Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association are jointly supporting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Be Antibiotics Aware* campaign. The goal of *Be Antibiotics Aware* is to remind the public and health care providers about safe antibiotic prescribing and use.

Antibiotic resistance is a challenge for health care providers and patients. Each year, at least two million Americans become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, resulting in 23,000 deaths. The *Be Antibiotics Aware* initiative helps share educational resources to assist health care professionals in improving antibiotic prescribing. It also promotes public education about the illnesses antibiotics treat, how to appropriately take antibiotics, and the side effects of antibiotics. Resources include fact sheets, a brochure, infographics, and tools for social media, video, and audio efforts. Health care providers, patients, and families are encouraged learn more about *Be Antibiotics Aware* by visiting [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use).

"Collaboration to promote effective and safe antibiotic use is essential to our patients and the public," said VHHA President and CEO Sean T. Connaughton. "We fully support the *Be Antibiotics Aware* campaign and its emphasis on proper use of antibiotics and commitment to prescription best practices."

HQI, VDH, and VHHA co-chair Virginia's Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Advisory Council. In November 2016, VHHA, VDH, MSV, and HQI held a joint news conference about improving antibiotic stewardship best practices to combat antibiotic resistance, which coincided with CDC's national "Get Smart About Antibiotics Week." VHHA livestreamed that event on Facebook; the recording can be [viewed here](#).

"Being 'antibiotics aware' means learning the facts about antibiotics, talking with your health care provider and, when necessary, taking them exactly as prescribed," said Virginia State Health

Commissioner Dr. Marissa J. Levine, MD, MPH, FAAFP. “We can all minimize our risk of illness by taking these simple preventive actions--washing our hands, getting an annual flu shot and staying home when ill. I encourage everyone to use Antibiotics Awareness Week as a chance to think about antibiotics to make sure we use them smartly and appropriately.”

“As the Medicare-funded Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization for Virginia, we are assisting clinicians across the state as they implement antibiotic stewardship programs in their facilities,” added Donald A. Glozer, MHA, FACHE, President and CEO of Health Quality Innovators. “By working together, we can increase awareness among health care providers, patients and families about the risks of antibiotic resistance and the steps we must all take to ‘Be Antibiotic Aware’ and use antibiotics wisely.”

“The correct use of our antibiotic arsenal is something in which everyone can help. It makes sense that patients often request antibiotics to treat their illnesses – they have worked for so long and we’ve often assumed ‘What can they hurt? Let’s just cover patients for their condition,’” said Dr. Kurt Elward, MD, MPH, FAAFP, President of the Medical Society of Virginia. “But it’s important for physicians to correctly prescribe and educate patients about antibiotics to help themselves, people they care about, and the future of medicine. I encourage you to use the many resources available to you and explain to patients good antibiotic stewardship. The MSV, along with all of our partners in health care, are dedicated to helping you provide effective, comforting, and responsible treatment plans for infectious diseases, and using these incredibly important medicines responsibly.”

**About VDH:** The [Virginia Department of Health](#) is dedicated to protecting the health and promoting the well-being of all people in Virginia. The agency’s vision is for Virginia to become the healthiest state in the nation. As a unified health system that includes a Central Office, 35 health districts and 119 health departments, VDH has 41 service areas that reflect the extensive range of VDH’s statutory responsibilities. VDH products and services benefit Virginians across their life span and can be broadly categorized as communicable disease prevention and control; preventive health services; environmental health hazards protection; drinking water protection; emergency preparedness response and recovery; emergency medical services; medical examiner and anatomical services; health assessment, promotion and education; health planning, quality oversight, and access to care; vital records and health statistics; and community health services.

**About MSV:** The [Medical Society of Virginia](#) is a professional association of more than 9,000 Virginia physicians, medical students, residents, physician assistants and physician assistant students. It was founded in 1820 and incorporated in 1824. MSV is headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, and the organization is entrusted to represent and advance physicians and patients of every specialty and practice setting across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**About HQI:** [Health Quality Innovators](#) (formerly known as VHQC) is a non-profit health care quality consulting organization and Virginia’s federally funded Quality Innovation Network-Quality Improvement Organization. It brings providers, patients, government and industry together to make patient care better, people healthier, and health care spending smarter. By delivering performance data, training, tools and quality coaching, HQI also builds the capacity that providers have to continually improve patient care and safety.

**About VHHA:** The [Virginia Hospital & Healthcare Association](#) is an alliance of 110 hospitals and 29 health delivery systems that develops and advocates for sound health care policy in the Commonwealth. Its mission is to achieve excellence in both health care and health. Its vision is through the power of

*collaboration to be recognized as a driving force behind making Virginia the healthiest state in the nation. Connect with VHHA through [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [ISupportVirginiaHospitals.com](#).*

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