

Trevor Kerr

Saturday, January 12, 2013

Submission to Senate Inquiry **Progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the 1999 Joint Expert Technical Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance.**

Senators -

I have comments directed primarily at ethical matters.

1. With regard to Recommendations 14 and 17, and to Chapter 10 (page 125), it is important always to keep in mind that a "problem microorganism" within the medical domain has always been isolated from (or in proximity to) an individual person. This linkage carries with it the hazard of stigmatisation. For instance, within a hospital data system, is it possible to remove the flag "MRSA Carrier"?

Thought should be given to the means by which data is stored in electronic databases and how data is transferred to State and Federal agencies.

Would it be possible to audit all of those "loosely connected programs established by a variety of interested groups" (p125) by someone familiar with the standards being developed for the National Electronic Health Record?

2. The 1999 Report did not address conflicts of interests. Any further developments should do so, since there is a primary interest of the pharmaceutical industry in patterns of resistance to antimicrobials. The Report does note the involvement of pharmaceutical companies for the maintenance of testing schemes. How these involvements translate into advantages for individual scientists and specialists should be fully declared.

3. The Report does not use the term "super bug". Experts who use it in public discourse should be challenged to provide a proper scientific definition of the entity, as they would be in a court case. The public may not be very intelligent in these matters, but to insult the electorate with contemptuous terminology doesn't seem very smart.

Yours sincerely