

## Consensus Statement: **Antimicrobial Resistance**

The New Zealand College of Midwives recognises that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a serious and growing threat to public health including the health of childbearing women and their babies. Midwives have a role in antimicrobial stewardship to reduce antimicrobial resistance.

### Rationale:

- Antimicrobial resistance is the ability of microbes' e.g bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi to resist the effects of medication previously used to treat infection. As a result, standard treatments become ineffective; infections persist and may spread to others <sup>2, 3, 4</sup>.
- New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening the ability to treat common infectious diseases, resulting in prolonged illness, disability, and death <sup>3,4,5</sup>.
- Without effective antimicrobials for prevention and treatment of infections medical procedures including surgery e.g caesarean section, become very high risk <sup>3,4</sup>.
- Reducing the need for antimicrobials reduces the opportunity for micro-organisms to develop resistance and share resistance genes.
- Within New Zealand, use and misuse of antimicrobial medicines, in humans, animals and agriculture, as well as international travel and trade, could accelerate the spread of resistance, increasing morbidity and mortality amongst our community <sup>4</sup>.
- Midwives are in an ideal position to educate women and their families about antimicrobial resistance and proper use of antimicrobials including antibiotics <sup>1,2,6</sup>.

### Guidelines/Recommendations:

Preventing infection and controlling transmission of micro-organisms are essential for effectively responding to antimicrobial resistance <sup>5,6</sup>. Midwives are expected to use clinical strategies that facilitate antimicrobial stewardship and cautious use of antimicrobials including;

- promoting healthy lifestyles including education on hygiene and food management
- promoting primary birthing options as less likelihood of exposure to hospital acquired infections

- using primary prevention of infection strategies, through appropriate Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) measures in the community and at birth settings<sup>2,6</sup>
- promoting judicious use of antimicrobials through careful prescribing supported with laboratory results<sup>1,2,5,6</sup>
- educating and supporting women and their families in the correct use of antimicrobial treatments
- promoting and using infection prevention & control processes
- promoting and facilitating physiological birth to reduce unnecessary interventions which increase the risk of infection
- screening women and babies for infections using New Zealand specific guidelines where possible e.g GBS risk based approach
- promoting the importance of skin-to-skin contact to support the development of a healthy microbiome
- promoting and supporting breastfeeding in order to support development of babies immune system and reduce the potential for infection

#### References:

<sup>1</sup> Furber, C., Allison, D., & Hindley, C. 2017. Antimicrobial resistance, antibiotic stewardship, and the midwife's role. *British Journal of Midwifery*, 25(11), 693-698.  
DOI: 10.12968/bjom.2017.25.11.693

<sup>2</sup> ICM. 2017. *Midwives and Prevention of Antimicrobial Resistance*. Position Statement: International Confederation of Midwives

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries. 2017. *Antimicrobial Resistance: New Zealand's current situation and identified areas for action*. Wellington: Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries.

<sup>4</sup> Royal Society Te Apārangi. 2017. *Antimicrobial Resistance – Implications for New Zealanders*. Evidence Update

<sup>5</sup> WHO. 2015. *Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance*. Geneva: World Health Organization.

<sup>6</sup> WHO. 2016. *Fight antimicrobial resistance: protect mothers and newborns*. Geneva: World Health Organization

**Ratification:**

*This statement was ratified at the New Zealand College of Midwives AGM on 23 August 2018*

The purpose of New Zealand College of Midwives Consensus Statements is to provide women, midwives and the maternity services with the profession's position on any given situation. The guidelines are designed to educate and support best practice. All position statements are regularly reviewed and updated in line with evidence-based practice.