

JOINT COMMITMENT STATEMENT ON ANTIBIOTIC STEWARDSHIP IN URGENT CARE

IMPORTANCE OF URGENT CARE STEWARDSHIP:

Since their initial use in the 1940s, antibiotics have saved millions of lives. Many organizations, including The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization, agree that antibiotic resistance has become an increasing problem over the ensuing decades. CDC estimates that each year in the United States, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least 23,000 people die each year as a direct result of these infections.¹ Use of antibiotics can also lead to unnecessary side effects ranging from mild allergic reactions to severe *Clostridium difficile* infections and death. This problem has been exacerbated by inappropriate use of antibiotics throughout all healthcare settings, including acute and ambulatory care. Antibiotic resistance impairs public health, escalates healthcare costs, harms individual patients, and reduces the ability of clinicians to deliver effective care for patients by making bacterial infections more difficult to treat. Collectively, these issues highlight the need to improve antibiotic use through antibiotic stewardship, defined as the effort to measure and optimize antibiotic use with a goal of improving patient safety and delivering high-quality health care.

THE ROLE OF URGENT CARE:

We recognize that urgent care— a rapidly growing sector providing 80-100 million U.S. outpatient visits each year — has an integral and important role of the overall delivery of ambulatory medicine in the USA. As a result of the sector's focus on episodic illness, urgent care providers manage a disproportionate share of patients with acute, infectious disease-related symptoms, such as cough, sore throat, and fever, as compared to traditional primary care practices. As a healthcare sector with a retail focus, urgent care sees many patients that expect an antibiotic prescription even when they don't need one; this challenge is amplified by the busy and walk-in nature of urgent care practice, and it is often difficult to help patients understand when antibiotics are appropriate. Thus, we recognize the important role the urgent care industry has in antibiotic stewardship.

OUR COMMITMENT:

We, the undersigned, are committed to doing our part to support and lead the urgent care industry forward in improving its antibiotic prescribing practices to reduce unnecessary antibiotic use and preserve the utility of these life-saving drugs. To mitigate these threats and to deliver high-quality care, we are committed to supporting research that will enhance our knowledge of antibiotic prescribing in urgent care, develop innovative urgent care antibiotic stewardship interventions, and build effective resources for urgent care providers and patients. Recognizing the pressing need for action, we are also committed to urgent care antibiotic stewardship efforts that can immediately reduce unnecessary antibiotic use while ensuring patients receive the best care and

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/index.html>

treatment possible. We are committed to working to develop organizational and collaborative solutions to raise awareness among patients, support the tracking and reporting of antibiotic use, provide ongoing education for urgent care providers and patients about appropriate antibiotic use and the importance of antibiotic stewardship, and implement procedures that support providers to practice evidence-based antibiotic prescribing.

Many challenges lie ahead in the fight against antibiotic resistance. It is our ambition to make urgent care a leader in outpatient antibiotic stewardship and in the fight against antibiotic resistance. By working together, we will maximize our chance for success.

Committed by,



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC)