

December 23, 1999

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Jane E. Henney
FDA Commissioner
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville MD 20857

Dear Ms. Henney:

I am alarmed that so many diseases we thought we'd conquered are returning, especially including tuberculosis. There is consensus among medical professionals that these infectious diseases are making a come-back due to the emergence of antibiotic-resistant bacterial pathogens.

There are two clear causes of such resistance to antibiotics. First, doctors are over-prescribing antibiotics. It seems that patients are demanding prescriptions for all sorts of ailments which are not caused by bacteria, such as the flu. Apparently, physicians find it easier to acquiesce, perhaps believing that their patients may feel better due to a placebo effect.

I ask that you do all in your power to inform the American public and medical community of the dangerous consequences of the overuse of antibiotics. I understand that this will be a long term effort to influence behavior, at most. But there is reason to be optimistic about eventual success. Look at the vast increase in recycling over the past 20 years, the result of greater public awareness.

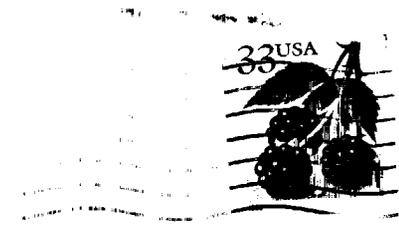
It is within your power to stop the other cause of antibiotic-resistant bacteria almost immediately. I urge you to prohibit as soon as possible all supplementation of animal feed with any antibiotic used for treatment of human illness. For excellent reasons, the World Health Organization and Centers for Disease Control have supported such a ban by the European Union. It just makes good sense. Perhaps American consumers will have to pay a few cents more for animal products. But surely that is preferable (and far less expensive) than to try to combat outbreaks of tuberculosis (now reaching epidemic proportions in Russia), polio and a variety of other infectious fatal diseases.

Sincerely,



Judith Alexander
1205 N. Harvey Ave.
Oak Park IL 60302

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