

29 September, 2015

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Intervention on Environmentally Persistent Pharmaceutical Pollutants (EPPPs)

Health Care Without Harm is a global nonprofit organisation working with the health sector in all regions of the world to become more sustainable.

Environmentally Persistent Pharmaceutical Pollutants (EPPPs) in the environment have been identified as an emerging environmental concern, with more than 600 pharmaceuticals having been detected in the environment worldwide (in water, soil, sludge, and organisms)^[1]. Due to the nature of the active ingredients in pharmaceuticals, which were designed to develop a response in humans and animals in low concentrations, they often remain unchanged during their consumption and excretion and there is growing concern about pharmaceuticals building up in the environment. This may harm the environment and, in the long-term, human health.

Of the pharmaceutical residues found in the environment, antibiotics have some of the most serious consequences, and there are major public health concerns about the presence of antibiotic-resistant pathogens. The international community has recognised the severity of AMR and has called for global action, with the WHO having released a global action plan in May 2015. We support the rational use of medicine as defined by the WHO, take back schemes, and others actions taken. At the same time we feel more concrete action needs to be taken to address EPPPs.

HCWH would welcome the adoption of EPPPs as a new emerging issue and we look forward to work with all stakeholders in the contact group and beyond to address the issue.

Umwelt Bundesamt (2014). Pharmaceuticals in the environment-the global perspective: Occurrence, effects, and potential cooperative action under SAICM.

http://www.pharmaceuticals-in-the-environment.org/files/en/bereich_4/application/pdf/pharmaceuticals_en_141210_screen.pdf