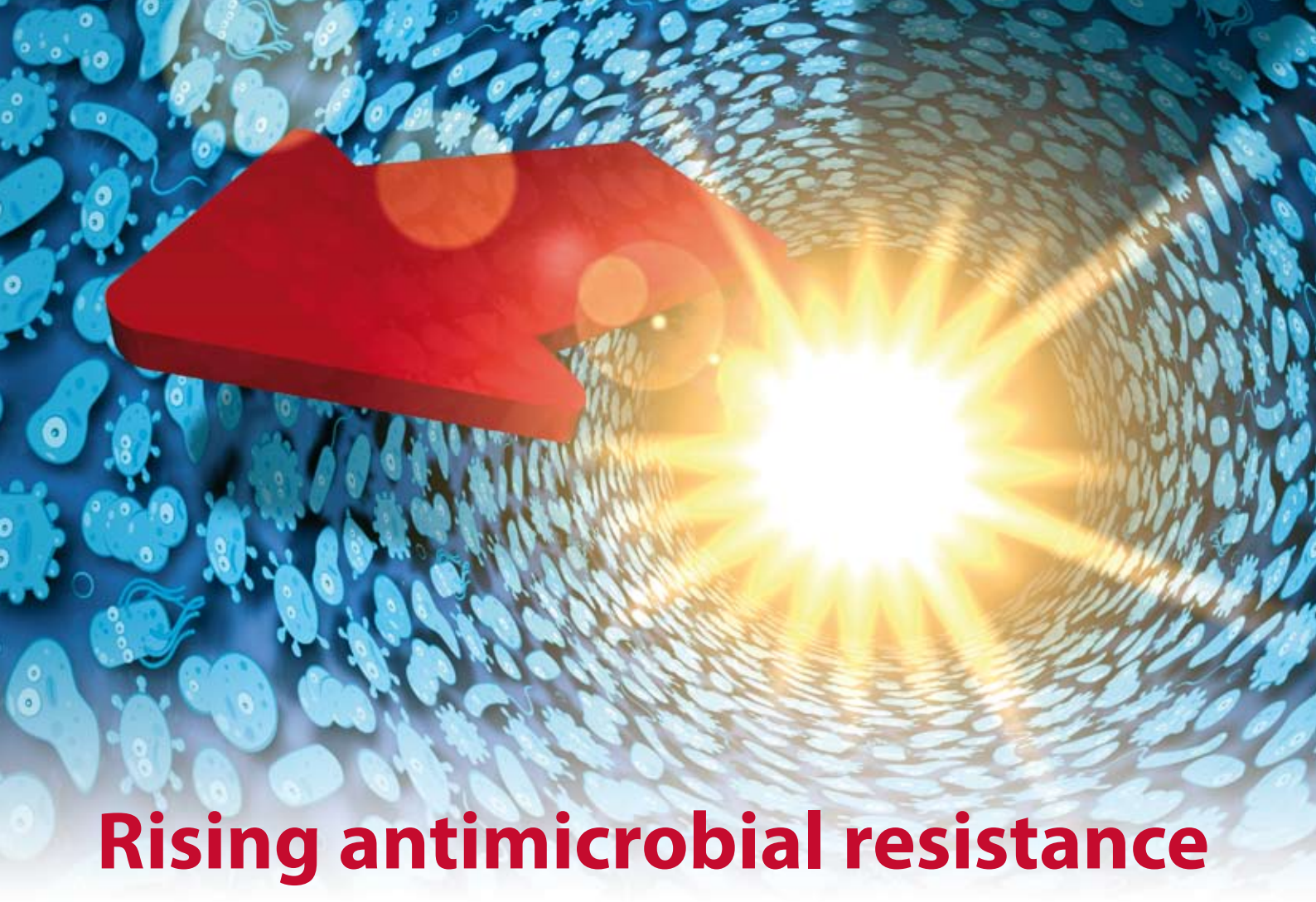

Rising antimicrobial resistance

Associate Professor Mark Thomas from the University of Auckland, in conjunction with Dr Alesha Smith and Professor Murray Tilyard from bpac^{nz} recently published an article in the New Zealand Medical Journal, entitled: "Rising antimicrobial resistance: a strong reason to reduce excessive antimicrobial consumption in New Zealand".

The volume of antibiotic medicines used in New Zealand was compared to other countries. The research indicates that in recent years, the amount of antibiotic medicines prescribed for people living in the community in New Zealand has been much greater than the amount prescribed for people in Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. The amount prescribed in New Zealand is more comparable to the amounts prescribed in Spain and Italy, countries where antibiotic use is considered profligate, and where antibiotic resistance has reached worrying levels. We need to strengthen our efforts to reduce antimicrobial consumption and slow the spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria in New Zealand.

Five key points from this article are:

1. The per capita level of antibiotic consumption within a country is a powerful driver of the emergence and proliferation of antibiotic resistant bacteria within that country.
2. Countries vary greatly in the level of antibiotic consumption and countries with high per capita levels of consumption have high levels of antibiotic resistance.
3. The per capita level of antibiotic consumption in New Zealand in recent years has been higher than that in most European countries. During 2010, only Greece, Belgium, France and Italy (countries widely considered to have profligate levels of antibiotic consumption) had higher levels of consumption than New Zealand.
4. Between 2005 and 2012 the average annual increase in total per capita antibiotic consumption in New Zealand has been greater than 6%.
5. Increased efforts to reduce antimicrobial consumption in New Zealand are required to slow the spread of antibiotic resistant microbes, and preserve the utility of antibiotics for future generations.

For further information, see:
http://journal.nzma.org.nz/journal/127-1394/