

# **How do parents decide on giving their kids antibiotics? Recent findings and implications**

## **Abstract**

Antibiotics are critical medicines in the treatment and prevention of bacterial infection. However, the overuse and misuse of antibiotic medicines facilitates the development and spread of antibiotic resistant bacteria, which has significant implications for public health. One part of the response to this problem has involved examining the ways in which antibiotics are accessed and used by consumers. As children are amongst the highest recipients of antibiotic medicines, this research focused on the parent/child sub-group to understand what drives parental decisions when deciding on the use of antibiotics for their children. Using a qualitative approach, this study explored the opinions and practices of parents living in remote areas of the Australian Northern Territory regarding the use of antibiotics with their children. Findings from this research highlight that parental decisions towards their children's use of antibiotics were influenced by their attitudes and beliefs, the social norms of the population and behavioural control over both access to antibiotics and informed antibiotic advice. In particular, the research identified that mothers living in rural and remote areas experiencing reduced access to health services may make decisions about antibiotic use out of fear and based on the advice of their personal network when they perceive their child is vulnerable to a health threat. The results of this study inform an understanding of psycho-social factors underlying antibiotic use and provide guidance for future research in the prediction and management of antibiotic use behaviours in rural contexts.

**Key words:** antibiotic resistance, behaviour, parents, children, rural, qualitative research.