



Office of the Assistant Secretary for  
Preparedness & Response

National Biodefense Science Board  
Washington, D.C. 20201

June 25, 2008

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

At the June 18, 2008, meeting of the National Biodefense Science Board, Robin Robinson, Ph.D., Deputy Assistant Secretary and Director for the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, described HHS efforts to advance personal preparedness through individual stockpiling of antibiotics and antivirals. The Board was briefed on BARDA's efforts to develop antiviral and antimicrobial MedKits and reviewed guidance, drafted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for health care providers and consumers with questions regarding the home stockpiling of the antibiotic doxycycline by obtaining a prescription from a physician.


Voting and ex-officio Board members had many questions and concerns about these efforts. The over-arching theme of the comments is that there remain many legitimate concerns over the potential negative impacts of the guidance documents for personal dispensing of doxycycline including many unknowns about the risks and benefits as well as potential outstanding legal issues. In particular, Board members expressed concern about the potential that home stockpiling could worsen the national situation regarding antimicrobial resistance and pose a risk for medication related accidents.

The Board agreed to establish a Working Group to study the many complex considerations that would affect any personal preparedness program. The Board members consistently expressed the need for better science to guide the process and help inform more careful and deliberate decision making.

I understand that the Department seeks to move forward in a timely manner on these issues, and so I have directed the Board staff to compile the relevant comments from the meeting for your consideration. This partial summary will be included in the full summary of our June 18 meeting, which will also be sent to you.

The attached summary details the opinions expressed during the meeting. The Board has not reached consensus on the issues discussed, nor does it have specific recommendations at this time. However, on behalf of the Board, I ask that you take these comments into serious consideration before proceeding with the personal preparedness measures described by Dr. Robinson and in the CDC drafted guidance.

Sincerely,

  
Patricia Quinlisk, M.D., M.P.H., Chair  
National Biodefense Science Board

Enclosure