

**Public Health Region 8 Antimicrobial Stewardship Regional Advisory  
Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
June 20, 2023  
1 PM – 3 PM**

**Microsoft TEAMS**

Table 1: PHR 8 Antimicrobial Stewardship Regional Advisory Committee member attendance at 6/20/2023 meeting.

MEMBER NAME	YES	NO	MEMBER NAME	YES	NO
Jason Bowling	X				
Martha Kennedy	X				
Emmanuel Opada	X				
Gerard Gawrys	X				
Rebecca Sanchez	X				

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Call to Order**

Ms. Vanessa Pierce called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. She announced the meeting was being recorded and transcribed. The minutes of the meeting will be available later for public review. Attendees were asked to turn cameras and microphones on when speaking and off when not speaking.

**Agenda Item 2: Introduction of Members**

Ms. Pierce welcomed and thanked the members for their time and dedication to improve antimicrobial stewardship (AS) in Public Health Region (PHR) 8. Each member introduced themselves as follows:

- Dr. Jason Bowling is an infectious disease physician. He is involved in antimicrobial stewardship at University Health Hospital in San Antonio.
- Ms. Martha Kennedy is a clinical nurse specialist. She works for a company with many long term care facilities. She has 30 years of experience helping with all aspects of infection control.
- Dr. Emmanuel Opada is currently the lead epidemiologist for Victoria County Health Department conducting surveillance and outbreak investigations. He has many years of experience as a practicing physician in Africa. His past experience also includes managing

projects sponsored by Global Fund for HIV prevention, care, and treatment.

- Dr. Gerard Gawrys is an infectious disease pharmacist. For ten years he was the infectious diseases pharmacy lead at Methodist Healthcare System in San Antonio. During this time, he coordinated antimicrobial stewardship efforts for six hospitals. He recently joined the team at University Health in San Antonio with Dr. Bowling where he serves as an infectious disease clinical pharmacy specialist.
- Dr. Rebecca Sanchez is a faculty member of the University of Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine in San Antonio teaching microbiology and immunology to medical students. She has a PhD in microbiology and immunology with a concentration in virology. She is also the Microbiology Director for the Master of Biomedical Sciences leading student research projects.

### **Agenda Item 3: Introduction of DSHS/HHSV Representatives**

Ms. Pierce thanked the following Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) attendees who joined the meeting: Ms. Cynthia Williams, PHR 8 Healthcare-associated Infection (HAI) Epidemiologist; Mr. David Reisman, Chief Ethics Officer, HHSC; and Ms. Sheri Mead, Quality Monitoring Program Representative, HHSC.

Ms. Pierce acknowledged Dr. Lillian Ringsdorf, Regional Medical Director, PHR 8 in attendance.

### **Agenda Item 4: Ethics Discussion**

Mr. David Reisman presented an overview of advisory committee ethics. Highlights of the overview included:

- Representation
- Confidential Information
- Disclosure
- Misuse of Department Property
- Honoraria
- Conflicts of Interest
- Prohibition on Lobbying
- Open Meetings Act/Public Information Act
- Bribery
- Public Servants

There were no questions after the presentation.

## Agenda Item 5: Regional Information Discussion

Ms. Cynthia Williams and Ms. Danielle Kim, Antimicrobial Resistance Epidemiologist, DSHS presented the regional AS and MDRO information for PHR 8. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Texas Notifiable Conditions list is used to guide reporting of certain diseases and outbreaks to local, regional and state health departments [Notifiable Conditions | Texas DSHS](#)
- MDROs included on the Texas Notifiable Conditions list include *Candida auris* (*C. auris*), carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacterales* (CRE), *Klebsiella* species and *E. coli*; vancomycin intermediate *Staphylococcus aureus* (VISA), and vancomycin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VRSA)
- Fourteen counties in PHR 8 had at least one reportable MDRO in 2021. Cases are counted by patient's county of residence.
- Fourteen counties in PHR 8 had at least one reportable MDRO reported in 2022. Data is provisional, not final.
- The Antimicrobial Resistance Laboratory Network (ARLN) was established to enhance laboratory capacity to quickly identify and contain antimicrobial resistance, track changes and provide outbreak response support.
- The DSHS State Lab in Austin is the ARLN for Texas.
- Although certain MDROs are required to be reported as a notifiable condition, the submission of isolates to the ARLN for testing is voluntary. *Candida auris* is the only isolate required to be submitted.
- The case counts may differ between the MDROs identified by the ARLN and those reported as a Texas Notifiable Condition.
- Antibiograms are tables created to show an organism's antimicrobial susceptibility and guide appropriate treatment selection.
- Antibiograms for 2020 and 2021 were created for each of the Texas public health regions using isolate susceptibility data of HAI-causing organisms reported to the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN).

The Committee members voiced the following questions or comments:

- Dr. Bowling asked if the information obtained for the antibiogram was related to HAIs reported to the NHSN and Ms. Williams confirmed.
- Dr. Bowling noted volunteer submission of isolates creates a gap in available information.

- Ms. Kim reported attempts are being made to encourage laboratories to increase isolate submissions.
- Dr. Opaga asked for additional information to support the increase in VISA cases seen in 2021 and 2022.
- Dr. Bowling noted a general trend towards increasing MSSA susceptibility again with decreased MRSA nationally and in Texas due to the availability of more MRSA medications other than vancomycin.
- Dr. Gawrys reported a slow but gradual decrease in use of vancomycin over the past several years.

### **Agenda Item 6: Vote on Chairperson**

Ms. Jacqueline Castillo introduced the vote for committee chairperson and read the list of responsibilities of the chairperson, as stated in the bylaws. No nominations were received prior to the meeting. Members were asked to nominate a chairperson.

- Ms. Kennedy nominated Dr. Bowling.
- Dr. Opada seconded the nomination for Dr. Bowling.
- Dr. Gawrys and Dr. Sanchez also nominated Dr. Bowling.
- Dr. Bowling accepted the nomination and provided a brief summary of his interest in leading the committee.

Ms. Castillo called for a motion to vote by ballot for the Chairperson.

- Ms. Kennedy motioned for a vote by ballot for Chairperson.
- Dr. Sanchez seconded the motion.
- Ms. Pierce launched a poll for vote by ballot. Only committee members were permitted cast a vote.
- Dr. Bowling received five votes and was unanimously chosen as the PHR 8 Antimicrobial Stewardship Regional Advisory Committee Chairperson.

### **Agenda Item 7: Vote on Bylaws**

Ms. Castillo introduced the vote on the advisory committee bylaws. The proposed bylaws were sent to members on June 13, 2023 for review and opportunity to suggest revisions. No revisions were suggested prior to or during this meeting.

- Ms. Kennedy motioned to hold a verbal vote on the bylaws.
- Dr. Bowling seconded the motion.
- Ms. Pierce called on each of the five members to cast a verbal vote.

- The bylaws were approved as written with five yes votes.
- The bylaws will be sent out to the committee members for signatures and stored on record.

### **Agenda Item 8: Public Comment and Open Forum**

Ms. Pierce allowed time for public comments to be shared. No members of the public offered comments.

Ms. Pierce opened the floor for Open Forum:

- Dr. Bowling suggested one objective for the committee would be to help improve communication about infections, MDRO status and isolation precautions between facilities during patient transfers.
- Ms. Kennedy reported quality improvement program requirements have contributed to improvements in antimicrobial stewardship in long term care facilities, but more education and support is needed to help nursing staff feel empowered to speak up for stewardship.
- Dr. Sanchez suggested development of an educational program and tools for nursing staff.
- Ms. Kennedy suggested including education for family members who often provide pressure to prescribe antibiotics.
- Dr. Bowling suggested standardizing the education and using local data to support the education. He suggested including education for providers also.
- Dr. Bowling suggested more education about isolation precautions to help remove the stigma associated with isolation.
- Dr. Gawrys is interested in seeing if the healthcare systems in the region could share and compare data on antimicrobial consumption and utilization.
- Dr. Opaga suggested education on the purpose and use of antibiograms.
- Ms. Kennedy is interested in helping nurses understand antimicrobial treatment duration.
- Dr. Bowling agreed with education about treatment duration and sharing evidence-based guidelines. He noted there is a challenge knowing when and how to get the information to the provider so that it is timely to their treatment decisions.
- Dr. Sanchez is interested in promoting mandatory reporting of MDROs in Texas and improving the barriers to reporting.
- Dr. Bowling agreed with better reporting while also ensuring the data is accurate and representative of the clinical picture seen in the community.

## **Agenda Item 9: Next Meeting and Agenda Items**

Ms. Pierce suggested members should decide on future meetings. According to House Bill 1848, members are only required to meet once per year. The members need to vote to meet additional times this year.

- Dr. Bowling motioned to have another meeting this year.
- Ms. Kennedy seconded the motion.
- Ms. Pierce called on each member to cast a vote. The proposal to meet again this year passed unanimously with five votes.
- Ms. Pierce announced she will reach out to members within the next few months to schedule another meeting.

Ms. Pierce asked for suggested agenda items for the next meeting. The following ideas were proposed:

- Education and educational tools for facility staff, providers, patients and families to include:
  - Antimicrobial stewardship
  - Treatment duration
  - Antibiofilms
  - Infection prevention and isolation
- Promoting mandatory reporting of MDROs
- Facility comparison of antimicrobial consumption

## **Agenda Item 10: Adjourn**

Ms. Pierce adjourned the meeting at 2:14 pm.