Over prescription of antibiotics for tonsillitis in secondary care

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Aim: To determine whether antibiotics are prescribed appropriately for acute tonsillitis in secondary care, according to the Centre criteria and the recently suggested fever pain clinical score.

Design & Setting: Cross sectional observational study was carried out at Northwick Park Hospital, London North West Healthcare (LNWH) NHS Trust.

Participants: All patients were diagnosed with acute tonsillitis at the emergency department, Northwick Park Hospital over a three month period ending 4th March 2015.

Results: Antibiotics were prescribed inappropriately to 76% (95% CI: 69%-82%) of patients diagnosed with acute tonsillitis presenting with <3 Centro criteria.

Conclusions & Recommendations: The study indicates that the scale of inappropriate antibiotic prescribing for acute tonsillitis in secondary care may be very high. The Centre and fever pain criteria are not being applied and broad spectrum antibiotics are being used to treat acute tonsillitis. The implementation of clinical scoring systems such as centre and fever pain in secondary care needs to be improved. Further research is needed to assess the outcome of using the above clinical scoring systems in secondary care, which is an important point of access for patients.