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### ABSTRACT

#### Title:

**Antibiotic stewardship program: Barriers and enablers of implementation in primary health care in Emirates Health Services, United Arab Emirates**

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**Background and aims:** Antimicrobial stewardship programs aim at promoting the appropriate use of antibiotics. The program is applied in UAE hospitals and primary healthcare settings to overcome the increasing antibiotic resistance. We have not come across any study regarding the barriers to antibiotic stewardship implementation in primary health care. The objective of this study is to explore these challenges and facilitators from the perspective of healthcare workers that might help build a strategic plan to enable healthcare workers to implement an antibiotic stewardship program.

**Methods:** This is a cross-sectional study on the Antimicrobial stewardship program in the United Arab Emirates, the study was based on an electronic online questionnaire survey distributed to all physicians and pharmacists in emirates health services primary healthcare centers in the United Arab Emirates.

**Results:** 192 responses were received from 7 primary health care centers. 85% were familiar with the concept of antimicrobial stewardship. Most participants thought that antibiotic resistance is a problem in our community and agree that the antibiotic stewardship program effectively reduces the antibiotic (89% and 86% respectively). Around 97% of the respondents from the Emirates health services primary healthcare centers reported that Physician education and training about antibiotic stewardship is important for the implementation of the antimicrobial stewardship program. 87% agree that the non-clarity of the guidelines could be a barrier to the implementation of antibiotic stewardship.

**Conclusions:** Healthcare workers highly perceived the antibiotic resistance problem, antimicrobial stewardship program, and its effectiveness. This study concluded that organizational support was the most perceived enabler of the program while the guideline-related barrier was the most perceived barrier by healthcare workers.