A Global View: Five Central Bank Decisions Serve as Warnings!

By: Brian Rich / Money and Markets.com / April 9, 2011

"This past week we heard from a slew of key central banks on monetary policy. And when it was all said and done, we got important information on what to expect from the markets and economies going forward.

"My read: Outlook highly uncertain.

"This time, they could end up triggering the crisis they've been so desperately trying to deny: The spread of insolvency to Spain, the most dangerous of the PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain, the troubled euro-zone members). The rate hike talk of recent months has already floated all government borrowing rates in Europe higher, including Spain."

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Antibiotic Superbugs CRKP & MERSA: Who's at Risk?

By: Lisa Collier Cool / Yahoo Health.com / April 7, 2011

"Misuse of antibiotics has led to a global health threat: the rise of dangerous -- or even fatal -- superbugs. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is now attacking both patients in hospitals and also in the community and a death..."
This past week we heard from a slew of key central banks on monetary policy. And when it was all said and done, we got important information on what to expect from the markets and economies going forward.

**First, it was another surprise rate hike out of China.** Its fifth in seven months. The concern: Runaway prices could spark social instability sending the world’s darling, rising economy into chaos.

Alternatively, China’s trying to mop up all of the money it flooded into its economy to achieve double-digit growth when the rest of the world was slumping. And the likely result is a slowdown in China that will produce far weaker growth than the world is banking on for global recovery.

My read: *Outlook highly uncertain.*

Next, it was the Reserve Bank of Australia. They held the line for the sixth straight month, following last year’s rate hiking campaign. The concern: The impact from December’s floods will hit growth and inflation readings coming down the pike.

My read: *Outlook uncertain.*

Then it was the Bank of Japan. In response to the crisis in Japan and “strong downward pressure on the economy,” the BOJ has already promised to pump another 5 trillion yen into the economy. And it will keep stimulating and taking whatever supportive actions are necessary.

My read: *Outlook highly uncertain.*

On Thursday, it was The Bank of England …

Although inflation is running high in the UK, the Bank of England held the line on its historic low interest rates and QE program. The policymakers’ line of reasoning: When you strip out the impact of a new increase in the Value Added Tax (VAT) and the challenges ahead given the other tough austerity measures the government has imposed in attempt to curtail the worse budget deficit among major economies, by next year inflation will be very weak.

My read: *Outlook uncertain.*

But the big decision on rates came when …

**All Eyes Shifted to the 17-Nation Euro Zone**

Of course, Europe is in the midst of a widening debt crisis and desperate fight to save the European Monetary Union from potential collapse. And Portugal just became the third country in the euro zone to admit it needs a lifeline to avoid default. That’s why the euro-zone economy is projected to be among the weakest performing major economies this year.

Moreover, Germany, the backbone and core of economic strength in the euro zone and the country with the deepest bailout pockets, has a huge export-driven economy. And the confluence of global economic shocks in recent months will almost certainly take a toll on the global demand for its exports.

My read: *Outlook highly uncertain.*

Nonetheless on Thursday, as expected, the European Central Bank (ECB) became the first central bank in the developed world to begin rate hikes — it started moving away from ultra-accommodative monetary policy.

But why would they make such a move given the economic climate?

When it comes to interest rates, a systemically threatening political, economic and solvency crisis among their own countries doesn’t matter to the ECB. Nor does the spreading social unrest and government overthrows in the Middle East and North Africa. Neither does a record earthquake, an unimaginably destructive Tsunami and an open ended nuclear disaster in the third largest economy in the world!

**What does matter to the ECB is inflation.**
Antibiotic Superbugs CRKP & MRSA: Who's at Risk?

By Lisa Collier Cool
Apr 07, 2011

Misure of antibiotics has led to a global health threat: the rise of dangerous—or even fatal—superbugs. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is now attacking both patients in hospitals and also in the community and a deadly new multi-drug resistant bacteria called carbapenem-resistant Klebsiella pneumoniae, or CRKP is now in the headlines. Last year, antibiotic resistant infections killed 25,000 people in Europe, the Guardian reports.

Unless steps are taken to address this crisis, the cures doctors have counted on to battle bacteria will soon be useless. CRKP has now been reported in 36 US states—and health officials suspect that it may also be triggering infections in the other 14 states where reporting isn’t required. High rates have been found in California, Texas, and Florida. The problem is that every time antibiotics are used, some bacteria survive, giving rise to dangerous new strains like MRSA and CRKP, which can quickly spread in hospitals and the community, causing infections that are hard or even impossible to cure. Doctors are forced to turn to more expensive and sometimes even impossible to cure. Doctors are forced to turn to more expensive and sometimes more toxic drugs of last resort. The problem is that every time antibiotics are used, some bacteria survive, giving rise to dangerous new strains like MRSA and CRKP, the CDC reports.

Understanding different types of bacteria.

What is antibiotic resistance? Almost every type of bacteria has evolved and mutated to become less and less responsive to common antibiotics, largely due to overuse of these medications. Because superbugs are resistant to these drugs, they can quickly spread in hospitals and the community, causing infections that are hard or even impossible to cure. Doctors are forced to turn to more expensive and sometimes more toxic drugs of last resort. The problem is that every time antibiotics are used, some bacteria survive, giving rise to dangerous new strains like MRSA and CRKP, the CDC reports.

What are CRKP and MRSA? Klebsiella is a common type of gram-negative bacteria that are found in our intestines (where the bugs don’t cause disease). The CRKP strain is resistant to almost all antibiotics, including carbapenems, the so-called “antibiotics of last resort.” MRSA (methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus) is a type of bacteria that live on the skin and can burrow deep into the body if someone has cuts or wounds, including those from surgery.

Who is at risk? CRKP and MRSA infects patients, usually the elderly—who are already ill and living in long-term healthcare facilities, such as nursing homes. People who are on ventilators, require IVs, or have undergone prolonged treatment with certain antibiotics face the greatest threat of CRKP infection. Healthy people are at very low risk for CRKP. There are two types of MRSA, a form that affects hospital patients, with similar risk factors to CRKP, and another even more frightening strain found in communities, attacking people of all ages who have not been in medical facilities, including athletes, weekend warriors who use locker rooms, kids in daycare centers, soldiers, and people who get tattoos. Nearly 500,000 people a year are hospitalized with MRSA.

Keeping hospital patients safe.

How likely is it to be fatal? In earlier outbreaks, 35 percent of CRKP-infected patients died. Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) reported in 2008. The death rate among those affected by the current outbreak isn’t yet known. About 19,000 deaths a year are linked to MRSA in the US and rates of the disease has rise...
Antibiotic Superbugs CRKP & MRSA: Who's at Risk? 

http://health.yahoo.net/experts/dayinhealth/antibiotic-superbugs-crkp-mrsa...
If there were no other evidence to tell us how close we are to the end of all things, it would be the rate at which time is hurtling into the past. It does not seem like a year since we were in New Orleans giving away books at Mardi Gras. But there again came the call, “Are you going to give away books during the parades?” And our response, once again: “Absolutely!”

The rolling and packaging of the books commenced. We planned to take thousands of books to an event which realistically could have accommodated hundreds of thousands more; but you do what you can as God makes provision for your efforts—right?

This year we decided to try a new tactic: we packaged a couple of boxes of books, then stood a bagful at bus stops along the parade route of the satellite community of Metairie. Once the parade began, we began our distribution to the crowds; once our supply ran out, we exited the parade and grabbed another bagful at the next bus stop, then went right back into the crowd. Within a couple of hours we had given away thousands of books to the crowds pleading, “Me! Me! Me! Give me something nice.”

A long-time veteran of book distribution, Emile Spalitta, made the suggestion that we try something similar the next day in New Orleans. So we devised a plan to place similar bags of books along the Saint Charles Avenue parade route once the cleaning regiment had gone through. At midnight that night we stood a bag at the corner of each block for almost a mile (the parade was scheduled to travel seven miles, with an estimated attendance of a million people). By 2 A.M. we were ready for bed.

The next day we parked in New Orleans and walked through the teeming crowds to where our first stack of books was waiting for us. The method again worked perfectly. The books were protected inside the big plastic bags, and simply blended in with the paraphernalia that campers and attendees of the parade had left overnight. As the floats started their procession, we began our distribution as the night before. Again, within a few hours we had successfully given away thousands more publications.

Our thanks are due to you, without whom our work would not be possible—thank you!

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