Stop AMR Global Media Monitor

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First major public-private partnership on AMR surveillance in Africa

The governments of Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda have entered a partnership with Pfizer and Wellcome, the first of its kind in the continent, to address their lack of country-specific data on AMR. A pilot program will run in two hospitals in each country over the next 3 to 5 years with the aims of developing lab facilities and training personnel on data collection. This will allow the countries to have more accurate records on their patients to inform appropriate policies, and on the global level will help identify resistant pathogens and drive research.

Source: Devex, 24 June 2020

AMR Cooperation between Indonesia and UK

The UK Department of Health and Community Services and the Indonesian Ministry of Health have agreed to collaborate to control AMR in Indonesia.

An MoU on Health Cooperation was signed by UK DHSC Representative Lord Bethell and Indonesian Minister of Health Terawan Agus Putranto, which focuses on prevention and control of diseases, research development and most importantly, delivery of public health services through telemedicine. In addition, a grant agreement for the Fleming Fund committed £4.8 million to Indonesian ministries to support the country's AMR surveillance capacities and provide a scholarship for up to 10 Indonesian scientists and clinicians.

Source: The Fleming Fund, 23 June 2020

WHO calls for better WASH practices to fight AMR

In a new technical brief, the WHO stresses the importance of improved WASH conditions as poor sanitation practices can lead to antibacterial resistance in a variety of ways. For example, water pollution from hospitals, farms and industrial waste can make bacteria stronger by exposing them to toxic metals, pesticides, and other chemicals. Overuse of antibiotics in agriculture and aquaculture can further spread resistance in manure and drainage water. Even wildlife can play a part, as they can acquire resistant bacteria from contaminated water from places with poor water quality and carry it in their guts over great distances

The organization calls for a holistic global approach which tackles AMR at all its stages, through integrated cooperation between science and engineering, medicine, social action, and responsible governance.

Source: The Jakarta Post, 18 June 2020

Reduced antibacterial drug development since 1980s

Research on the antibiotic pipeline in the U.S. over the last 40 years paints a bleak picture as it shows there has been a drastic decrease in the development of Investigational New Drug applications (INDs). It peaked at 61 INDs in the 1980s and declined to only 34 in the 2010s, with 2019 having an 11-year low. Research has particularly slowed down on three classes of antibiotics; cephalosporins, quinolones, and macrolides, as the larger pharmaceutical companies who studied them left the pipeline. Smaller firms have since taken a bigger role, pursuing more innovative and necessary drug classes, but these usually take longer for marketing approval and have a lower success rate.

The study, whilst recognising the subpar situation and the need for increased incentives, offers hope. Half of the 25 drugs currently in the American pipeline seem effective against gram-negative bacteria, and a third may even combat carbapenem-resistant organisms. Worldwide, the WHO recognises more than 250 potential antibacterial drugs in preclinical development.

Source: Oxford Academic, 25 June 2020

Livestock use twice as many antibiotics than humans

Only 35 percent of medically important antibiotics sold in the United States are for human use. The remaining majority of 65 percent is used by the livestock industry, especially by cattle (27%) and swine (25%). Antibiotics are usually fed to these animals regardless of whether they suffer from infections or not, and it is this inappropriate and excessive usage that increases chances of resistant strains arising. Furthermore, the sales of antibiotics to food animal production increased in 2018 after decreasing between 2015 and 2017.

This article emphasizes the need for stricter regulation of antibiotic use in livestock, and calls for public authorities to increase reporting on the sales and usage of antibiotics for both human and farming purposes.

Source: NRDC, 15 June 2020

Increased antibiotic use during the pandemic will cause more deaths

The COVID-19 pandemic has lead to an increased use of antibiotics despite the WHO stating that few patients with COVID-19 need antibiotic treatment for ensuing infections. The over-prescription of antibiotics ultimately causes more bacteria to become resistant to traditional treatments, so the organization has released recommendations for doctors to not provide antibiotics to those with mild symptoms nor to those not suspected of having a bacterial infection.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated that there were a "worrying number" of bacterial infections developing resistance and called AMR "one of the most urgent challenges of our time".

Source: The Jakarta Post, 2 June 2020

Antibiotics over prescribed in low- and middle-income countries

The increased use of antibiotic drugs in LMIC over the last 20 years prompted a review of studies analysing medicine use trends in 27 of these countries. It discovered that on average, 50% of patients visiting primary care centres had been prescribed at least one antibiotic, although this number was as high as 90% in some nations, and that inappropriate antibiotic prescriptions represented over half of the total. Also noteworthy is that only 60% of prescriptions were for Access Group Antibiotics (those with low potential for resistance), and in some countries the proportion of Watch Group Antibiotics (with high resistance potential) used were extremely high, particularly in Mexico, Pakistan and China.

The review puts a spotlight on the need for further research on medical practices, for increased awareness on over-prescription of antibiotics, and for developing WHO recommendations on their use into national guidelines.

Source: PLOS Medicine, 16 June 2020

Pharma giants to fund $1 billion venture for novel antibiotics

After years forsaking antibiotic research, some of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world appear to be returning to the field with a new collective for-profit venture worth $1 billion. The firms, which include Pfizer, Novo Nordisk and Bayer Pharmaceuticals, will join forces with European governments and the EIB to finance small biotechnology firms developing mid-stage antibiotics.

Although some believe this amount is not particularly high compared to Big Pharma's usual expenditure, and especially considering the need for urgent action against AMR, it is a step in the right direction. The funds could indeed help cash-strapped start-ups in a sector where for-profit investors are not particularly active and innovation needs to be rewarded.

Source: STAT News, 29 June 2020