



Stop AMR Global Media Monitor

18 – 25 September 2020

www.stopamr.eu

StopAMR participates in the European Commission's Research and Innovation Days

This week, the Commission's Research and Innovation Days brought together policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs and the public. The *Global Challenges Need Global responses: Covid-19* session responded to our StopAMR team's question, "What about Antimicrobial Resistance? Isn't this the next global pandemic? How do we plan to address this issue?"

Dr. Michael Makanga is the Executive Director, EDCTP Association Secretariat. He answered, "I cannot agree more that Antimicrobial Resistance is an important area that we need to address. We need to look at this in the broader context beyond antibiotics, but against all microbes, and in this case, product development. This is the area that must be given special attention to protect both the new and existing interventions against drug resistance. Additionally, this falls under the area of preparedness. Mechanisms have to be put in place to prepare for and prevent Antimicrobial Resistance and to ensure that there is ongoing research to encounter this." (Source: [Video](#) , 23 September 2020)

The *Foresight: for a resilient European in the Post COVID world* session responded to our StopAMR team's question, "Have you been using strategic foresight to look at future pandemics beyond COVID-19? Such as Antimicrobial Resistance outbreaks?"

Mr Duncan Cass-Beggs (Councillor for strategic foresight, OECD) highlighted that he, along with strategic forecasters, are often asked where the foresight was when it came to predicting COVID and that they tend to reply that it was not a black swan but rather a grey rhinoceros. In other words, it was an obvious and expected event where the question was not 'if' but 'when'. For him AMR clearly falls in the same category. Regarding the role of foresight in the case of such events they can clearly see coming (even if the public at large

and some politicians do not [author's note]), Mr Cass-Beggs stressed that the real value would be at the intersections between such threat scenarios, including climate change, and scenarios on the future economy or society. This is where critical insights can be gathered. This is where, in his opinion, you start to get to potential interactions and impacts that are not immediately intuitive. (Source: [Video](#) , 24 September 2020)

Webinar: AMR in the light of COVID-19

This Thursday 24th September, Dame Sally Davies as UK Special Envoy on AMR hosted the first of four webinars in the Antimicrobial Resistance Fighter Coalition's webinar series on how the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic can be applied to AMR action. The talk titled "AMR in the light of COVID-19", brought together experts from the WHO, Africa's CDC, the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) and the Oxford University Clinical Research Unit - Ha Noi Centre of Tropical Medicine.

Attendees reiterated the importance of improved data gathering and surveillance but, most importantly, the need for that data to be used by policymakers. They also discussed how AMR (much like COVID-19) is a global phenomenon but affects communities very differently based on their governance, culture and education, and thus policies need to consider the varying local conditions. Finally, the speakers also stressed the need for governments to prioritise and sustain the prioritization of AMR action, especially now that the world has seen how closely linked public health and economic security are.

Source: [Antimicrobial Resistance Fighter Coalition](#)

New potential broad-spectrum fungicides discovered

A Chinese study has discovered a potential new target for fungicide development. Researchers identified that Very Long-Chain Fatty Acids (VLCFAs)- chemicals involved in cell-shape regulation- also mediate septin organization in pathogenic fungi, which is required for host entry. This makes VLCFA biosynthesis a new target for controlling pathogenic fungi by impairing septin's action and thus providing a potential means for disease prevention. Since the VLCFA biosynthesis pathway is present in both plant and animal fungal pathogens, this discovery could lead to the development of new fungicides for use in plants and humans.

The study also recognises the urgent need for new fungal disease targets due to the rapidly increasing global problem of fungicidal resistance which, like antimicrobial resistance, is primarily driven by the widespread use/misuse of fungicides.

Source: [BioWorld](#), 23 September 2020

Report reveals consistently high use areas in major Australian cities

A new report, compiled by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), tracked antibiotic use in Australia over a recent five-year period and revealed a sustained pattern of high use in some of the most disadvantaged areas of major cities across the country, such as the outer suburbs of Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney. Whilst there was an overall 13.3% drop nationwide between 2013–14 and 2017–18, the report notes that the country's prescribing rates remain comparatively high, with 22.7 defined daily doses per 1000 people recorded in 2017–18, which is more than twice as high as some European countries.

Professor John Turnidge, ACSQHC Senior Medical Advisor, said that Australia already has “*four different types of superbugs that worry us on a regular basis now*”. On the same note, Dr Rashmi Sharma, co-author of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP)'s report ‘Response to antimicrobial resistance in primary care’, said that “*We have to remain hyper vigilant and really think twice before we prescribe antibiotics, across the board, and for all conditions in all areas of the country*”.

Source: [RACGP](#), 23 September 2020

Phages and their promise in curbing AMR in the Global South

Phages, tiny viruses that are natural predators of bacteria, can destroy antibiotic resistant bacteria with high specificity. Though they have their drawbacks, scientists agree they are worthy of further research. One of them is biomedical engineer Tobi Nagel, who said: “*We have 30 years until the worst of this [AMR] crisis. Phages could be made into drugs in less than 10 years.*” She also stated that “*they can be produced with relatively simple equipment that is readily available to scientists in developing countries, which are the most endangered by the rise of AMR*”. In fact, a 2014 study claims that by 2050 approximately 90% of deaths attributable to AMR are expected to occur in Africa and Asia.

Nagel also highlights how the lack of an appropriate regulatory framework on the use of phages for human health therapy is making access to them non-existent, and the strict criteria required to approve drugs prohibitively increases costs. “*This is a major obstacle for all players. There are other forms of controlled production which might enable developing countries to access drugs they desperately need at prices they can actually afford*” says Nagel. She has also suggested the WHO could potentially help oversee the use of phage-based products in developing nations.

Now, the WHO does not even officially include phage therapy in its action plan against AMR, but Nagel hopes this could change if new clinical trials prove positive.

Source: [The Guardian](#), 21 September 2020

Targets for antimicrobials must allow for ‘massive’ variation within livestock sector

An interview with a livestock sustainability consultant emphasized that despite the intense debate on antimicrobials and the massive variation between member states and species, appropriate sustainability metrics are desperately needed on farms. The European

Commission has outlined in the Farm to Fork strategy a 50% reduction in the sale of antimicrobials for farmed animals and in aquaculture by 2030.

This reduction can only be accomplished if the farm industry is more transparent on antimicrobial use. Now, there are considerable gaps in antimicrobial data on farms, which means that the animal diseases cannot be quantified and linked to environmental and economic costs. In addition to more data from farmers, *“industry-wide data is also needed to identify the areas with potential for huge gains, compared to diseases that will continue needing treatment”*. Without quantifiable evidence of benefit, *“business-minded farmers won’t be inclined to change”*.

[Euractiv](#) , 18 September 2020
