



PRESS RELEASE

EPN AND ReAct LAUNCH ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) CAMPAIGN

Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) and ReAct announce the launch of the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) campaign: *Fight AMR! Save medicines for our children.*

Globally, infectious diseases kill 11 (eleven) million people annually, 95% of whom live in resource constrained countries. The major life-saving intervention for infectious diseases is antimicrobial treatment. However, antimicrobial resistance is rapidly reducing the effectiveness of these life-saving medicines. In the past, medicine and science were able to stay ahead of this natural phenomenon through the discovery of potent new classes of antimicrobials, a process that flourished from 1930s to 1970s but has since slowed to a virtual standstill. For resource poor countries it is critical for useful agents to be preserved since there is no way that these countries can mobilize the resources for massive treatment of say Multi Drug Resistant (MDR) TB which costs up to 1400 times more to treat than susceptible TB. Immediate action is required in the current global context where 2.7 billion people or 43% of the world's population live on less than USD 2 per day.

Numerous factors have contributed to and continue to aggravate the problem including unnecessary prescribing of medicines by trained and untrained health workers, insufficient adherence to antimicrobial treatment by patients, uncontrolled dispensing by medicine vendors, widespread use of antimicrobial agents in animal husbandry and poor infection control practices. Research shows that half of medicines used in Africa are irrationally used and up to two thirds of antimicrobials, which are prescription only medicines, are supplied over the counter.

The impact of AMR on individuals as well as on public health is enormous. Negative effects include increased morbidity and mortality, prolonged periods of infectiousness (and, consequently, increased risk of transmission of resistant pathogens to others), increased direct (longer hospital stay, use of more expensive 2nd or 3rd line drugs) and indirect (prolonged absence from work) costs.

In spite of the development of a global strategy by the World Health Organization in 2001 to address the issues of drug resistance, concerted and comprehensive action is still lacking. The reality of the current situation is that valuable agents will continue to be lost leading to higher costs of health care and higher levels of morbidity and mortality associated with infectious diseases.

EPN and ReAct will launch the *Fight AMR* campaign on Wednesday 20th May 2009 in Geneva during the World Health Assembly. Simultaneously, local campaigns will take place in various countries across the world including Malawi, Moldova, Peru and Togo among others.

The campaign is intended to stimulate both global and local actors to take concrete action to address AMR. Political leaders, policy makers, funding agencies, health training institutions, health care providers, patients, the general public and the media all have a role to play in supporting and promoting rational use of medicines and other interventions that can be used to contain the development of resistance and save medicines for future generations.

EPN and ReAct appreciate the support of other partners including DIFAEM, Sida, the USAID supported SPS program of Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and the Health and Healing program of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

For further information visit www.reactgroup.org or www.epnetwork.org

ReAct contact:

ReAct, Uppsala University
Box 256, 751 05 Uppsala, Sweden
Tel +46 18 471 6607
Fax +46 18 471 6609
Email: react@medsci.uu.se