

The Antibiotic Innovation Study: Expert Voices on a Critical Need Press Release

In a report published today, public health and industry experts conclude that urgent action is needed to tackle the lack of research and development into new antibiotics. The report launch coincides with the EU Intergovernmental Conference, hosted by the UK Department of Health, addressing the same theme.

The Antibiotic Innovation Study, published by React¹, interviewed senior scientists, doctors, pharmaceutical executives, regulators and academics to ask why there are so few new antibiotics in the pipeline and how to solve the problem. Only two new classes of antibiotics have been brought to market in the past 30 years. The consequences are growing numbers of sick and untreatable patients and deaths associated with lack of access to effective antibiotics. The spread of MRSA is just one example of how increasing resistance to existing medicines is affecting human health. As resistance grows the need for new drugs becomes more urgent.

Drug development takes time—between 12 and 15 years. It is already clear that new treatments will be needed particularly for hospital-acquired Gram negative bacterial infections, for community-acquired resistant infections, and for infections common in developing countries: diseases such as tuberculosis and typhoid fever. Despite this need, commercial pressures and scientific challenges have led many companies to cut back antibiotic research or withdraw from the market altogether.

All those surveyed agreed that the market alone will not solve the problem in time and that governments need to take active steps to promote successful antibiotic innovation and development. Some participants suggested this would entail amending existing market structures by, for example, investing substantially in early research, removing barriers to innovation, redefining what constitutes value for money in antibiotics and paying more for true innovation. Others think antibiotic innovation needs some sort of public-private partnership.

The report is a wake-up call to those who assume that because we have the antibiotics we need today, we will have them tomorrow. It is also a reminder that millions of people across the globe do not have access to antibiotics today. The study concludes that urgent, concerted action is needed now. If not we will be left, in the words of one interviewee *“asking 21st century patients to accept 19th century medicine.”*

¹ Notes to Editors

The study is available in pdf-format at the React website, <http://www.react-group.org>.

- a. React is a global network of concerned individuals and organisations working to combat antibiotic resistance and promote the development of new antibacterial agents accessible for all.
- b. For further information and background, please contact the report’s author, Sophia Tickell +44 (0)780 895 3524, Professor Otto Cars +46708920203, Tony White +44 (0)7725317702 or EU Intergovernmental Conference Organisers, Prof Roger Finch +44 (0)7801855518 or Prof Richard Wise +44 (0)7909807154.