

**PRESS RELEASE**

***Keep Antibiotics Alive!***

***'Stop the Super Bugs!'* say health experts and activists**

**Uppsala, Sweden:** A global 'Stop the Super Bugs' campaign has been launched by a network of concerned medical researchers and health activists to keep currently available antibiotics effective and prevent the emergence of new drug resistant microbes.

At a three-day meeting 60 participants from 23 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas discussed ways to alert the world to the growing menace of the so-called 'Super Bugs' that cannot be treated with any known antibiotics.

"In 15 years' time modern medicine will be dead, organ transplantation will be impossible and our children will not be safe from common infections. 21<sup>st</sup> century patients will have to accept 19<sup>th</sup> century medicine" said Otto Cars of the Action on Resistance to Antibiotics or REACT.

The network has evolved a list of benchmarks by which governments around the world will be judged for their response to the threat of antibiotic resistance. Among the benchmarks are the existence of diagnostic capability to monitor drug-resistant microbes, regulations on use of antibiotics and measures to control infectious diseases.

The network, that brings together concerned doctors, scientists, policy makers, health and human rights activists, wants bodies like the WHO and its member governments to scale up measures to stop the rampant misuse of antibiotics. Widespread inappropriate use in medical practice and the massive use of antibiotics in agriculture as animal growth promoters have been key factors in fuelling the spread of mutant microbes that develop resistance.

The participants are also asking drug research and development institutions to reverse the alarming drop in funds for innovating new antibiotics. They are also calling upon the pharmaceutical industry to ensure the ethical promotion of antibiotic use.

'We are running out of time. Current and future generations around the globe should have effective treatment of bacterial infections', said Professor Eduardo Gotuzzo of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Lima, Peru.

Participants at the Uppsala meeting feared a return to the pre-antibiotic era where, for example, child mortality from infections such as pneumonia, already high in many developing countries, would increase dramatically. Antibiotic resistance is also likely to jeopardize advanced medical procedures such as cancer therapy, hip replacement procedures, organ transplantations and implants of prostheses, where antibiotics are crucial to ensure patient safety.

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Over 4 million people, mostly children under five years of age, die every year of acute respiratory tract infections. A growing percentage of these today are due to multi-drug resistant bacteria.

In the United Kingdom from 1993 to 2003 the deaths due to multi-resistant staphylococci (MRSA) in hospital settings has increased fifteen fold.

Among the goals of the new network are to convince policy makers, doctors, scientific and research organizations as well as civil society to do something to tackle the threat posed by antibiotic resistance. It also wants to inform, involve and mobilize communities to take the problem seriously and protect their right to safe and effective antibiotics. The network will encourage and support capacity building programs to understand and evolve effective ways of tackling the problem.

Antibiotic resistance arises because microorganisms, when exposed to an antibiotic, mutate and emerge as a resistant strain that cannot be treated. Overuse of antibiotics promotes the survival of resistant bacteria until these so-called 'Super Bugs' become commonplace, and the infections they cause become expensive- or even impossible- to treat.

**For further information contact:**

Christina Greko

REACT

Phone: +46-18-611 95 38

[christina.greko.react@ucr.uu.se](mailto:christina.greko.react@ucr.uu.se)