Tackling the antimicrobial resistance innovation crisis
Provisional Agenda Item 16.5 – Antimicrobial drug resistance

67th World Health Assembly, Geneva, 2014

Resistance to antibiotics is increasingly being recognised as one of the most serious threats to health worldwide. In the EU alone, half of all hospital acquired infections are drug resistant\(^1\). In the USA, conservative estimates have shown more than 23000 people die each year as a consequence of these infections\(^2\).

Compounding the issue of increasing resistance to current antibiotics is a reduction in research in the quality and number of new antibiotics. In 2009 only two new antimicrobials were under development, both in primary stages, where the failure rate is high\(^3\). Worldwide, a study in 2004 showed only 6 out of 506 drugs in development by 22 large companies were antimicrobials\(^4\) and that many of the new drugs on the market were slight modifications of existing formulations.

Whilst interventions to slow the development of antimicrobial resistance are important, none can halt it, and so the only way to be sure we’ll continue to have effective drugs in the future is to work on developing new ones. Whilst the WHA draft resolution (EB134.R13) deals comprehensively with the containment of AMR, it fails to adequately tackle the innovation crisis.

The traditional cost-price linkage model of R&D has resulted in a failure of antibiotic innovation. Sales of antibiotics must be limited to prevent resistance, which means recouping R&D investments through sales will never be a lucrative proposition. This means profit-driven R&D priorities are not aligned to health need and the pharmaceutical pipeline is currently close to empty. It is essential new innovation models are utilised now as drug development can take 10-20 years.

We argue that the findings of the 2012 CEWG report on R&D, financing and coordination should be applied to tackle the same market failure for AMR as Neglected Tropical Diseases, including:

- “de-linking” of the cost of R&D from the price of medications through a predictable financing mechanism from governmental sources, shielding research agendas from the demands of profitability, instead allowing a focus for R&D based on AMR need;
- management of intellectual property to ensure open knowledge sharing and improve further innovation from research

At the 67th World Health Assembly we urge member states to:

- recognize the need for new R&D models for meeting the threatening crisis of AMR and the relevance of the CEWG report findings to antimicrobial product innovation;
- emphasise to the Assembly that the global action plan and high level initiative must fully address innovation and new R&D models, including de-linkage and open-knowledge innovation;
- ensure the new global health research and development observatory has both a tracking and coordinating role for research and development on antimicrobial resistance;
- ensure new antimicrobials are affordable, especially in low and middle income countries

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3. European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control and European Medicines Agency joint report. 2009