

# Addressing the 'Double-Edged Sword' of Antimicrobial Medications

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JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, November 15, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The development of antimicrobial medications is undoubtedly one of humankind's most incredible achievements, saving billions of lives in the roughly 100 years since they were first discovered. This single discovery has nearly doubled people's life expectancy.



Yet less than 20 years after penicillin was discovered, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) was first detected. Since then, resistance has continued to grow into a major public health threat, causing an estimated 1 million deaths per year, and contributing to millions more.

Indicating the seriousness of the AMR threat, the United Nations General Assembly recently recognized it as one of the world's most urgent health threats and demanded immediate action to safeguard the ability to treat diseases and enhance food security.

That's why the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is announcing a series of initiatives that support the World Health Organization's (WHO's) One Health program during the Fourth High-Level Global Ministerial Conference on AMR, which it is currently hosting in Jeddah.

What sets One Health apart from previous AMR resistance efforts is its integrated approach to the crisis. It is designed to drive actions in human health, animal health, agriculture and the environment to ensure that lifesaving antimicrobials continue to be available, while protecting against deadly resistance.

The 2024 AMR conference features the largest number of participating countries in the history of this bi-annual meeting. As a group, attending countries are demonstrating their commitment

to:

- Doing a better job of preventing and controlling infections
  - Fully implementing national AMR action plans
  - Taking steps to provide equitable access to antibiotics, and
  - Developing new tools to address the growing challenges in animal and plant health.
- Specifically at this meeting, the agreed Jeddah Declaration – titled, ‘From Declaration to Implementation’ – translates each country’s commitments into actions, which include:
- The establishment of a global scientific panel to study and fight AMR
  - The creation of a Biotech Bridge that supports AMR-related research, development and innovation, and
  - The development of a learning hub to boost community awareness of antimicrobial resistance.

World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has compared antimicrobial resistance (AMR) to climate change in terms of its critical impact on global health. He highlighted the devastating toll of AMR, which currently claims 1.3 million lives annually. The UN General Assembly's Political Declaration on AMR has set ambitious targets, including a 10% reduction in deaths from bacterial AMR by 2030, marking a significant step in the global fight against this growing threat.

Dr. Tedros emphasized three key priorities for implementing the declaration: increasing sustainable financing through both domestic and international channels, ensuring equitable access to antimicrobials while preventing misuse, and advancing research and innovation in the field. Notably, he pointed out that reducing antimicrobial use in animals by 30% could potentially increase global GDP by US\$14 billion by 2050. The WHO chief stressed that strong international collaboration is essential to protect these vital medicines and combat the rising challenge of AMR effectively.

Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, praised Saudi Arabia’s role as host of the Fourth AMR Ministerial Conference, and for its leadership initiatives. She said:

“The Kingdom is stepping up on the world stage to take on antimicrobial resistance, one of the most important and urgent global public health threats. Its willingness to partner with the full constellation of participants at the AMR Ministerial Meeting demonstrates the openness and collaborative spirit needed to slow, and ultimately stop, resistance and all of its damaging knock-on effects.”

Throughout the AMR meeting, the Kingdom demonstrated its commitment to the key priorities identified during the meeting, including surveillance and stewardship, capacity-building, funding, governance, innovation, and R&D.

H.E. Fahad bin Abdurrahman Al Jalajel, Saudi Minister of Health, concluded: “Antimicrobial

resistance represents a serious threat to global public health, and we look forward to working with anyone, anywhere to take on the challenge of eliminating AMR. We must build on current partnerships and forge new alliances to secure the health, safety, environment and economic development the world needs.”

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