

WHA51.17 Emerging and other communicable diseases: antimicrobial resistance

The Fifty-first World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Director-General on emerging and other communicable diseases: antimicrobial resistance;¹

Concerned about the rapid emergence and spread of human pathogens resistant to available antibiotics;

Aware that antimicrobial resistance is increasingly hampering treatment of infectious diseases as a result either of totally ineffective antibiotics currently available or of the high cost of “new generation” agents;

Concerned about the extensive use of antibiotics in food production, which may further accelerate the development of such resistance,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to encourage the development of sustainable systems to detect antimicrobial-resistant pathogens, thereby increasing awareness of antimicrobial resistance, and to monitor volumes and patterns of use of antimicrobial agents and the impact of control measures;

(2) to develop educational programmes for professional staff and the general public to encourage the appropriate and cost-effective use of antimicrobial agents;

(3) to improve practices to prevent the spread of infection and thereby the spread of resistant pathogens, and to promote appropriate antibiotic use in health care facilities and in the community;

(4) to develop measures to protect health workers from the hazards of resistant pathogens;

(5) to develop measures to prohibit the dispensing of antimicrobials without the prescription of a qualified health-care professional;

(6) to strengthen legislation to prevent the manufacture, sale and distribution of counterfeit antimicrobial agents and the sale of antibiotics on the informal market;

(7) to take measures to encourage the reduced use of antimicrobials in food-animal production;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to support countries in their efforts to control antimicrobial resistance through the strengthening of laboratory capacity for the detection of resistant pathogens;

(2) to collaborate in developing sustainable national policies for rational antimicrobial use, not only in human medicine, but also in food-animal production;

(3) to collaborate with the public health sector, the pharmaceutical industry, universities and institutions concerned with research, laboratory testing, marketing, prescription and consumption of antimicrobial agents, in order to encourage the sharing of knowledge and resources to combat antimicrobial resistance;

(4) to devise means for the gathering and sharing of information by countries and regions concerning resistance in certain pathogens and to promote international cooperation among Member States;

(5) to develop programmes of information and education for prescribers and users of antimicrobial agents;

(6) to encourage promotion of research and development of new antimicrobial agents.

(Tenth plenary meeting, 16 May 1998 -
Committee A, fifth report)