



Antimicrobial resistance: the other Pandemic

ASLM2021 Symposium 1

Co-conveners

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- **Mirfin Mpundu**, reACT Africa

Summary

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been identified as one of the top priorities for global health with the potential of causing 10 million deaths a year by 2050 if left unaddressed. It threatens to reverse the gains made in modern medicine that has allowed us to treat many infectious diseases, perform surgeries, treat cancer and other conditions. Acknowledging the gravity and urgency for action, member states at the World Health Assembly adopted the resolution to address AMR through the global action plan, which outlined 5 key strategic objectives.

- To improve awareness and understanding of antimicrobial resistance through effective communication, education and training.
- To strengthen the knowledge and evidence base through surveillance and research.
- To reduce the incidence of infection through effective sanitation, hygiene, and infection prevention measures.
- To optimize the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health; and
- To develop the economic case for sustainable investment that takes account of the needs of all countries and increase investment in new medicines, diagnostic tools, vaccines, and other interventions.

Countries committed to developing AMR NAPs within 2 years, guided by the AMR Global Action Plan. In 2016, the UN General assembly convened the first-ever high-level meeting on AMR, acknowledged the need for immediate action, and set up the ad-hoc interagency coordinating group (IACG). The IACG aimed to provide practical guidance on the approaches needed to ensure sustained effective global action to address antimicrobial resistance.

With this level of action at the global level, most countries have developed AMR NAPs. At the same time, unfortunately, most LMICs have been challenged to implement them. The reasons are many: from lack of political commitment, lack of human and financial resources, lack of surveillance data to inform the AMR gravity and patterns that could inform country-level AMR gravity, lack of access to quality-assured medicines, to lack of awareness and knowledge of AMR by both healthcare workers and the communities.

COVID-19 has also changed the landscape having made countries shift priorities to COVID response, at the expense of other public health issues and routine care, including conducting routine surveillance. Despite this, some countries mostly those supported by funding agencies like the Fleming Fund, have moved towards strengthening their national surveillance systems and are reporting some AMR surveillance data.

Learning Objectives

This symposium seeks to:

- Highlight the lessons learnt from the establishment of national AMR surveillance systems as part of the initial phase of NAP implementation, including the impact of the COVID pandemic.
- Discuss the successes and challenges of turning AMR surveillance data into action by critically examining what worked well or less per the implementation of global AMR policies and recommendations and what could be the innovation and transform AMR surveillance in the specific context of low and middle-income countries of Africa

Countries will also share best practices and investment cases that will make a real impact in the fight against AMR, while the health system continues to respond to the pandemic. The outcomes of the discussion will highlight systems or collaborative health approaches for addressing AMR through collaborative teamwork in a health system and how the important strategic objective number 2, strengthening knowledge and evidence base through surveillance and research, can be realised.

Session Programme

Presenter & Affiliation	Title
Dr Yewande Halimi (Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention) Dr Mirfin Mpundu (reACT Africa)	Welcome, introduction and opening remarks
Edwin Shumba (ASLM) Geetanjali Kapoor (CDDEP)	An exploration of the AMR surveillance laboratory networks and the AMR prevalence in 14 countries of Africa MAAP findings
Prof Marc Mendelson	The challenges and opportunities of transforming AMR data into public health action
Prof Gunturi Revathi	The role of laboratory systems and antimicrobial stewardship

Dr Philip Mathew	The consequences of the COVID-19 on AMR
Otto Cars	Reflections on the global AMR response over the last 20 years: How can barriers for implementation of AMR National Actions Plans be surmounted ?
All session participants	Question/Answer panel discussion
Dr Mirfin Mpundu (reACT Africa)	Summary and closing remarks