

# Political advocacy and closing knowledge gaps to address antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

 GLOBAL LEADERS GROUP  
ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

## A Global Leaders Group on AMR and University of Malta event

22 November 2023

The Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Malta, in collaboration with the Global Leaders Group (GLG) on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), hosted a symposium in Malta focused on raising awareness of AMR. The event was attended in person by faculty of health sciences, students and healthcare workers and by 150 attendees virtually.

### AMR is a threat across One Health sectors

Hon Chris Fearne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Health of Malta and vice-chair of the GLG, opened the event with a call to action for a global response to AMR before it is too late. He noted that raising awareness about the severity of AMR is crucial. Hon Fearne discussed how data currently being gathered on antibiotic prescribing among physicians in Malta will be used to better understand antimicrobial use and how Malta is contributing to the fight against AMR. He encouraged the collection and use of integrated surveillance data to inform decision making in the AMR response.



Professor Dame Sally Davies, United Kingdom Special Envoy on AMR and GLG member, focused on the urgency that is needed to act against AMR. She noted that AMR is not only cross sectoral, but also cross generational, with the efficacy of medicines at risk for future generations. She stated that in 2019 there were more deaths due to AMR than HIV, TB or Malaria. She noted that investments are urgently needed to fund infrastructure to combat AMR, such as clean water and waste management systems, laboratory upgrades and innovative technologies. She urged political leaders to make bold commitments during the High-Level Meeting (HLM) on AMR at the United Nations General Assembly in 2024. Dame Sally also noted the need for improved supply chain security, and manufacturing and financial incentives to address the antibiotic pipeline and access crisis.



Professor Michael Borg, Chair of the National AMR Committee of Malta, discussed similarities between AMR and the climate crisis, noting that both require behavioural change to prevent an existential threat. He noted that, like the climate crisis, a global social movement is required to tackle AMR, but that a bottom-up approach to change will take too long.

Dr Haileyesus Getahun, Director of the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat (QJS) on AMR and the Global Coordination Department of World Health Organization (WHO), provided an update on the coordinated response to address AMR by the quadripartite organizations – The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), WHO and the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH). He noted that the 2016 political declaration was an instrumental milestone in the global response to AMR and contained eight commitments to address AMR, however, much remains to be done. Dr Getahun urged the global community to unify its voice for transformational commitments at the HLM on AMR in 2024 as suggested by the GLG, namely the areas of financing, accountable governance, surveillance, transformed systems, environment, pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and evidence- and outcome-oriented targets.

Dr Ermira Tartari Bonnici Lecturer, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Malta, discussed the importance of a patient-centered approach to addressing AMR. She noted that this approach includes increasing awareness of AMR, empowering people to be champions against AMR, promoting responsible antimicrobial use, prioritizing people's needs and values, and providing equitable access to care.

Ms Vanessa Carter, Founder of the AMR Narrative, an AMR Patient Survivor and a One Health activist, shared her personal experience about acquiring a drug-resistant infection in hospital after receiving antibiotic treatment. She currently works across three pillars to participate in the fight against AMR, which include developing advocacy capacity, increasing awareness of AMR and fostering a global community. She noted that AMR is a diverse, complex topic and encouraged people to listen to patient voices as each story is different.

Dr Vanessa Camilleri, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Information & Communication Technology at the University of Malta, discussed how artificial intelligence (AI) can be a tool in combatting AMR in healthcare settings.

Mr Gavin Schranz of the WHO Youth4Health Network and a M.Sc. Digital Health student at the University of Malta, shared his research in promoting awareness of AMR by bridging knowledge gaps in AMR. He shared an interactive tool that educates people on AMR, responsible antimicrobial use and prescribing information with the hope of increasing the public's awareness and understanding of AMR.

The event enlightened attendees regarding behaviour change as part of the solution to AMR and the critical need for political action. There was an emphasis on the need for bold, concrete commitments at the HLM on AMR at the UN General Assembly in 2024 to combat this escalating health threat.

