Forging partnerships between science and policy: A high-level AMR event

GLOBAL LEADERS GROUP ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

An event co-hosted by the Global Leaders Group (GLG) on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID)

Copenhagen, Denmark, 14 April 2023

The GLG and ESCMID co-hosted a high-level event on AMR at which government leaders, policymakers and scientists from around the world came together to discuss the need for strong partnerships between policy makers and researchers to develop solutions for one of the greatest health threats facing our world today.

Speakers highlighted the need for a broad One Health research agenda to address the challenges of AMR across sectors. Speakers emphasized the need for urgent action before drug resistance has even more serious impact on human, animal, plant and environmental health. They noted the need for adequate funding for AMR national action plans and for behavioural change to reduce antimicrobial use and prevent the emergence and spread of AMR.

Welcome and keynote speakers

GLG Vice-Chair Dr Chris Fearne, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Malta, and ESCMID president Professor Annelies Zinkernagel welcomed clinicians, scientists and policy makers. Dr Fearne emphasized the crisis in the antibiotic research and development and access pipeline and the need for greater investments in the development of new antibiotics and other needed tools, including vaccines, diagnostics and new approaches to antimicrobial waste management.

Her Royal Highness Crown Princess Mary of Denmark noted that AMR is one of the most significant health challenges that the world faces today, highlighting the need for global collaboration to develop and implement sustainable solutions to AMR.

H.E. Ms Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and GLG Chair, noted that inaction on AMR could mean the reversal of a century of medical progress. She urged people to follow the science - a lesson learned in addressing COVID-19 and all other global health challenges.

H.E. Ms Sophie Løhde, Minister of the Interior and Health of Denmark, noted that all use of antibiotics contributes to some level of drug resistance. She noted that burden of AMR is highest in countries with the least resources to tackle it and emphasized the importance of a One Health approach.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, urged scientists and policy makers to work together to develop and finance innovative solutions to the research and development pipeline and access crisis for new antimicrobials.

Preventive measures for AMR: COVID-19 lessons and the role of research

Dr Fearne and Professor Zinkernagel chaired the first panel and welcomed the panelists.

GLG member Professor Lothar Wieler, Chair of the Digital Health Cluster at Hasso Plattner-Institute in Potsdam and Professor of Digital Global Public Health in Germany highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic had shown that responses to AMR must be based on data and evidence.

Professor Gagandeep Kang, Department of Gastrointestinal Sciences, Christian Medical College, Vellore in India, shared examples of how access to interventions including appropriate diagnoses, infection prevention and control and vaccination decreased overall use of antimicrobials in patients during the COVID-19 pandemic – interventions that are also critical to respond to AMR.

Professor Evelina Tacconelli, Director, Infectious Diseases Section, Verona University Hospital in Italy, noted that timely data and data sharing were critical to implementing effective interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic and are also vital in addressing AMR. She highlighted the need for research on vulnerable populations, infection prevention and control and implementation of antibiotic policies.

Panel discussions focused on the need for effective surveillance and quality data to tackle AMR, as well as the importance of communicating science and evidence to the public, including policy makers and youth, to support informed decision making.

Catalyzing innovation and access to AMR diagnostics for humans and animals

GLG member Ms. Sunita Narain, Director-General, Centre for Science and Environment in India and Dr Robert Leo Skov, ESCMID President-elect and Secretary General, chaired the second panel and welcomed the panelists.

GLG member, Professor Scott Weese, GLG member, Professor at the University of Guelph, Director of the Centre for Public Health and Zoonoses, Chief of Infection Control at Ontario Veterinary College in Canada, emphasized the need for disease prevention and reduction antimicrobial use to address AMR. He noted that innovations in the AMR response must be accompanied by effective communications and stewardship and that social scientists have a greater role to play in addressing the AMR crisis.

Professor Sharon Peacock from the Department of Medicine, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom and Executive Director and Chair of the COVID-19 Genomics UK Consortium, noted that innovation should focus on stronger diagnostic ecosystems in communities and hospitals, accurate diagnoses, diagnostic surveillance and use of local data.

Professor Marc Bonten, Department of Epidemiology, University Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands, also noted that diagnostics are critical to ensure that antibiotics are prescribed appropriately and that new diagnostics are only useful if accompanied by good antimicrobial stewardship.

Panel discussions centered around behaviour change to reduce antimicrobial use and the need to address regulatory barriers to vaccination and diagnostics in both human and animal health.

Conclusion

Dr Haileyesus Getahun, Director of the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR, provided an overview of the positive impact of past United Nations General Assembly high-level meetings with regard to promoting political action on global health threats. He noted the urgency and opportunity for bold, specific commitments from political leaders to address AMR at the UNGA High-level Meeting on AMR in 2024.

This GLG-ESCMID high-level AMR event marked an important step forward in collaboration and multi-disciplinary partnerships to ensure that the world has effective antimicrobials long into the future.