Picture a scenario where infections become totally untreatable because none of the available antimicrobial agents work. This is not imaginary, but is likely to happen very soon if we don’t act urgently, intensely, and consistently to tackle the rising tide of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

This week, the global health and development community is commemorating the first World Antibiotic Awareness Week
Spearheaded by the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise global awareness on the magnitude, reach, and severity of antibiotic resistance [5]; the event comes at a time when resistance to many antimicrobials, not just antibiotics, has now escalated to pandemic proportions and is a serious global health risk that requires urgent attention. In fact, the WHO has labeled AMR one of the biggest global public health threats.

Extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis and multidrug-resistant hospital infections are revealing examples of such a looming crisis. A recent report from the United Kingdom [6] predicts the catastrophic consequences AMR will have wrought by the year 2050 if we don’t act now to contain it: about 10 million deaths a year and a cumulative cost of $100 trillion.

A worldwide analysis by WHO [7] indicates that most countries don’t have comprehensive national plans to contain AMR, and that AMR awareness is low in all regions of the world. AMR is a multi-factorial problem affecting all infectious diseases of public health significance.

Effective solutions therefore lie in mounting multi-faceted interventions with commitment, involvement, and collaboration of stakeholders from diverse sectors.

To learn more about the various factors contributing to drug resistance and the interventions recommended to address them, visit the new Global Health eLearning (GHeL) Center course on AMR (Part 2) [8]. Management Sciences for Health (MSH), through USAID’s Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program [9], authored the course and collaborated with USAID’s Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project [10] to finalize it. This new course complements the previously-published Part 1 [11], which provides an introduction to AMR and its impacts.

Take the GHeL course: Antimicrobial resistance (Part 2) [8]

To learn more about how MSH and SIAPS help combat AMR throughout health systems, see this related post [9].

Portions of this post originally appeared on K4Health [10] and SIAPS [9].

Related

- From policies to patients: Handling antibiotics with care across the pharmaceutical system [9]

antimicrobial resistance [12], K4Health [13], pharmaceutical management [14]

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