

Chancellor urges global action to tackle antimicrobial resistance crisis

The health and economic prosperity of future generations is at risk unless we act urgently to address antimicrobial resistance, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond will say today during the first ever joint meeting of G20 Finance and Health Ministers in Osaka, Japan (28 June).

It is estimated that drug-resistant bugs are to blame for 700,000 deaths worldwide each year, and this figure is predicted to rise to 10 million by 2050 if urgent action is not taken. It is also predicted that by 2050 antimicrobial resistance will cause a loss of between 1.1% and 3.8% from annual global (GDP).

During the meeting the Chancellor will stress that this issue is not only a matter for health ministers, but finance ministers too, and that world leaders need to work together to improve incentives for businesses to develop new antibiotics. He will also say that the World Bank and other multilateral development banks need to better understand the risks and impacts of antimicrobial resistance, and take these into account when making investments.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Hammond said:

This week's G20 is unique in that it brings together Finance and Health Ministers from around the world for the first time to discuss global health security and action on collectively tackling antimicrobial resistance.

G20 countries have hugely benefited from advanced medicines and have a responsibility to act urgently on an issue that could kill more people than cancer by 2050.

The UK will continue to lead the fight against antimicrobial resistance and will argue in the G20 for additional funding for research and innovative financing models to incentivise businesses to produce new drugs.

Established drugs are showing increasing resistance to infection, but developing new antibiotics is a long and expensive process. New drugs must compete with much cheaper generic ones already in use, and any new antibiotic must be used in accordance with strong guidance to preserve their effectiveness, meaning there is often little financial incentive for businesses to produce them. The Chancellor will go on to say that because of these conditions, the market is failing to develop the new and essential antibiotics we need.

Although world leaders have repeatedly recognised the need to address the

problem, progress has been limited.

The UK has been leading the fight against antibiotic resistance. In January this year the government launched a 20-year vision and 5-year national action plan for how the UK will contribute to containing and controlling antimicrobial resistance by 2040. The plan includes the trial of a new way of paying companies for their drugs based on how valuable their medicines are to the NHS rather than on the quantity of antibiotics used, to better incentivise the development of new drugs. Last year, the government also committed £32 million funding for research centres to explore new ways to inform prescribing and identify patterns of resistance.

Last week the Department of Health and Social Care also announced that it would be retaining the world-leading expertise of outgoing Chief Medical Officer Professor Dame Sally Davies, as the UK's Special Envoy on Antimicrobial Resistance.

In the margins of the G20 Summit, the Chancellor will also meet with several other Finance Ministers, including his US, French, and German counterparts, to discuss trade and investment.

Further Information

AMR 5-year action plan

In January the government published a 20-year vision and 5-year national action plan for how the UK will contribute to containing and controlling antimicrobial resistance by 2040. The plans include targets, such as:

1. cutting the number of drug-resistant infections by 10% (5,000 infections) by 2025
2. reducing the use of antibiotics in humans by a further 15% by 2024
3. preventing at least 15,000 patients from contracting infections as a result of their healthcare each year by 2024

A major focus of the plan is to make sure current antibiotics stay effective by reducing the number of resistant infections and supporting clinicians to prescribe appropriately.

As part of the plan the pharmaceutical industry is also expected to take more responsibility for tackling antibiotic resistance. NICE and NHS England are testing an innovative new reimbursement model that will pay pharmaceutical companies based on a NICE-led health technology assessment of how valuable their medicines are to the NHS, rather than on the quantity of antibiotics used. The value is estimated by NICE through an adapted 'Health Technology Assessment' with information from health economic modelling and expert opinion.

Since 2014, the UK has cut the amount of antibiotics it uses in humans by more than 7% and sales of antibiotics for use in food-producing animals have dropped by 40%. But the number of drug-resistant bloodstream infections have increased by 35% from 2013 to 2017. Without effective antibiotics, straightforward, everyday operations like caesarean sections or hip replacements could become too dangerous to perform.

Research & Development

The government continues to deliver a record increase to Research and Development funding with an additional £7 billion by 2022 through the National Productivity Investment Fund.