The PARIS declaration against antibiotic resistance

Jean Carlet MD for the members of the World Alliance Against Antibiotic Resistance (WAAAR)

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We are in danger of losing the antibiotic effectiveness. An alarming increase in bacterial resistance, combined with an almost complete absence of new drugs, represent one of the most important public health issues of our time. Antibiotics are unique medications whose targets (bacteria) are living organisms, evolving, adapting and acquiring mechanisms that confer resistance to those drugs. It is our absolute duty to keep the antibiotic active as treatment for human diseases. Treatment failures occur in patients with community acquired infections caused by multidrug-resistant (MDR) bacteria. Even more commonly, hospital acquired infections are caused by multi-resistant bacteria. The risks increases in the most vulnerable patients (e.g., major abdominal surgery, organ transplantation, immunosuppressive treatments, cancer therapy, joint replacement, and more generally hospitalization in the ICU), and therefore some treatments could very well become impossible to perform! It is estimated than 25000 patients in Europe, and 23000 in the USA die from infections caused by resistant micro-organisms.

Antibiotic resistance is directly related to the volume of antibiotics which is used. Yet, antibiotic prescription is still viewed as a benign act, in both humans and in animals. Worldwide the volumes of antibiotics used in people, animals, and other fields of agriculture are huge, and in most countries continue to rise. The change for the environment is paramount. The widespread and indiscriminate use of antibiotics pollutes the environment with low levels of antibiotics, fostering the progressive development and dissemination of resistance genes.

We must preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics through proactive strategies similar to those used to save endangered species, in keeping with the concept of sustainable development. Antibiotics are in fact deeply modifying the structure of bacterial ecosystems, and possibly all the microbiosphere. A healthy microbiosphere deserves to be put on the UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage, in line of other critical values of human survival. Antibiotics are uniquely valuable medications that must be prescribed only when they are necessary and effective. Each prescription should weight the short-term benefits to the patient (which obviously deserve priority in the event of a bacterial infection) against the short-term adverse effects on the patient and the negative medium-term effects on bacterial ecology. Rational antibiotic prescribing practices require an orchestrated effort by the healthcare system users and the prescribers.

SAFEGUARDING ANTIBIOTICS requires an orchestrated effort by healthcare system users and prescribers. The primary objective of WAAAR is to raise awareness among all stakeholders of the urgency and magnitude of the threat. The Alliance is dedicated to actively lobbying for antibiotics preservation and to raise awareness among antibiotic prescribers, policy-makers, patient’s safety groups, pharmaceutical industry, international health organizations, politicians and the entire population**.**

. WAAAR is a group of more than 660 individuals from 55 different countries representing all the key stakeholders (MDs, veterinarians, pharmacists, nurses, evolutionary biologists, ecologists, environmentalists…) including patients’ advocacy groups. The Alliance receives support from more than 125 learned societies or professional groups throughout the world. It is a nonprofit organization open to professionals and users worldwide. WAAAR receives no funding from medical industry.

This declaration, one of the actions of the Alliance, has been launched through a series of initiatives. The first step of the process took place with the launch of the WAAAR declaration during the congress of the European Society of Intensive Care Medicine (ESICM), in Paris, in October 2013. A multidisciplinary international scientific committee was set up which defined priorities. The first draft of the document was submitted to the members of WAAAR, to the representatives of the international and national medical societies supporting the project and to agencies. The document has been consolidated at the time of the European Society of Clinical microbiology and Infectious diseases (ESCMID) meeting, in Barcelona, in May 2014. After an extensive review by all members of WAAAR and other stakeholders, the final document is released today.

The Alliance advocates a number of important measures: ( not in order of importance)

* A much more cautious and controlled approach to the use of antibiotics, in all areas ( humans, animals, agriculture…), in the hospitals and the community (Antibiotic safety and stewardship). Enough human resources must be provided to do the job.
* Relentless efforts to prevent cross-transmission of MDR organisms (hand hygiene) both in hospitals and in private practices and to prevent infections (devices…)
* The development of treatment strategies for veterinary medicine that have the smallest possible ecological impact (antibiotic safety).
* The development of rapid and accurate diagnostic tests, to target the use of antibiotics to proven bacterial infections, or modulate the length of therapy.
* The ban of the use of antibiotics in humans and animals for therapy or prophylaxis (including the use as growth factors) without an attempt to diagnose the cause of the infection, or to target specific micro-organisms (metaphylaxis, surgery…).
* The control of sanitary conditions around the world (used water, treatment plants, sewage control).
* The limitation of the availability of over the counter antibiotic use and other illegal dissemination
* The improvement of international surveillance and regulatory controls against production and sales of counterfeit antibiotics, outdated drugs and inadequately formulated antibiotics which do not meet the specifications listed on the label.
* An increased surveillance of antibiotic resistance and use, and specific diseases with regular feedback to healthcare professionals and public.
* A charter of antibiotic preservation organized by WHO, and signed by ministries of health
* A change in the research and development programs, with push and pull initiatives
* A change in the financial feedback to the companies after commercialization
* The development of educational and training programs for healthcare professionals and consumers
* An Increased support to basic and applied research efforts in human and veterinary medicine.
* A Support for funding research and development of new antibiotics, with combined effort from regulatory agencies, academia, and the pharmaceutical industry, and re-evaluation of previously discarded ones.
* The development of new compounds with specific effects (ie: adhesion, delivery of toxins, stabilization of plasmids…)
* The development of new anti-bacterial vaccines

**We urge all of you to participate to this action. Antibiotics must be protected. It is an absolute emergency, and it is our duty. Please, help us!**

People supporting the WAAAR declaration

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