

The Invasion of the 'Superbugs'

And the rise of the Champions



Antibiotics worked so well against infections that they soon became the miracle drug. For over 70 years, they have continued to help us survive many life-threatening infections and operations. They have increased our lifespan by an average of 20 years.



But now, we have started losing that battle against infectious diseases. Not only are bacteria fighting back and becoming stronger. The process of creating or discovering new antibiotics continues to be long and tedious.



In every region of the world, bacteria and other microbes are becoming more resistant to modern medicine. Causing people to be sicker for longer, and increasing the challenges and costs of health care.



The emergence of these drug-resistant "super-bugs" has even been described as "worse than AIDS". Only our joint actions to promote correct use of antibiotics can minimize the threat of antimicrobial resistance and help us prolong the useful lifespan of these drugs.



Bacteria

Science says that our bodies have about 10 trillion human cells and bacteria, which outnumber human cells 10 to 1. But thankfully, many of these microorganisms are beneficial. In some cases however bacteria cause very serious diseases.

Our bodies have their own unique tool for fighting diseases called the immune system. This system is normally strong enough to clear mild bacterial infections; and that is why most times doctors only prescribe antibiotics for serious bacterial infections.



Antibiotics

Antibiotics are medicines that are supposed to help us to fight infections and heal by killing or slowing down the growth of bacteria. There are more than seven different categories of antibiotics, each used to treat a certain type of bacteria. It's therefore very important, when you get sick not to 'self-medicate' with antibiotics. Instead visit a doctor or other healthcare provider who will not only determine what you are suffering from, but also identify the best treatment to heal your body.



Antimicrobial Resistance

If antibiotics are prescribed, it is very important to follow the instructions provided. When not used in the correct way, antibiotics may not work properly. Antibiotics which are taken for too short or too long a period, at too low a dosage, for the wrong disease, or which are fake or poor quality, can encourage the development of antibiotic resistance. The medicine may fail to kill all the bacteria and as a result, the bacteria grow much stronger and becomes resistant.

Resistance is spread quickly from one person to another; in schools, families, hospitals, churches, markets, work places, and throughout the community. But surprisingly, a simple habit like washing hands with soap and water can stop the spread of these harmful bacteria

Fake hurts

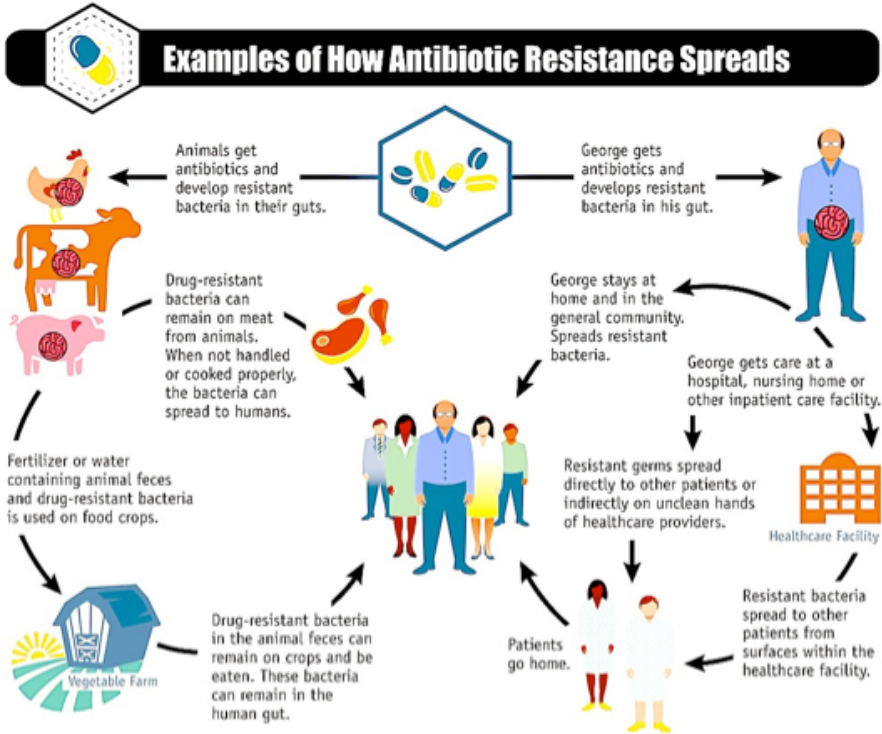
In communities, where patients do not have access to basic health facilities, many patients are forced to look for other sources for health provisions. Many of these sources are illegal and provide fake and poor quality medicines that not only

contribute to antibiotic resistance but also result to prolonged sickness. It's therefore very important that communities protect themselves against fake drugs by avoiding and speaking up against unauthorized drug sellers.

Everybody is involved

When farmers mix antibiotics with feeds to increase livestock growth, some bacteria in these animals become resistant to the antibiotics. This resistance is passed on to people when they consume meat, eggs and milk from these animals or have direct

contact with them. Environments polluted by antibiotics also contribute to the problem, in example fish farming, agriculture practices or waste from hospitals, pharmaceutical industries and human settlements.



Why should you care?

At this rate, we may all soon start dying of the commonest diseases and operations that are so easily treated today, like diarrhea, pneumonia, tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases.

Antibiotic resistance has led to the use of newer medicines that are more expensive, have more serious side effects and may not

even be available in resource-constrained health facilities.

The spread of antibiotic resistance has become a global problem with very serious consequences, especially for Africa which is already struggling with high levels of infections in the midst of limited health and development resources.

What can you do?

SUPERHEROES VS SUPERBUGS: THE RISE OF THE CHAMPIONS LET'S SAVE ANTIBIOTICS!

As leaders of today and tomorrow, students everywhere must take up their roles as Champions against antibiotic resistance: mobilize your friends, your schoolmates, your peers, your families and communities for Awareness, Action, and Accountability.

Educate yourselves and each other about correct use of antibiotics:

- Use antibiotics correctly and only when prescribed by a doctor.
- Complete the full dose of antibiotics, even if you feel better.

- Talk to your healthcare provider about antibiotic resistance.
- Do not share antibiotics with others or use leftover prescriptions.
- Do not pressurize health care providers to prescribe antibiotics.

Take Simple steps to Improve hygiene and sanitation:

- Clean the environment and manage waste.
- Wash your hands and shared items and surfaces with soap and running water.

Good luck champions!



www.epnetwork.org

Not-Fun Facts

- 1** Antibiotics do not work on illnesses that are caused by viruses such as the common cold and flu.
- 2**
 - Almost 50% of antibiotic use is unnecessary.
 - Only 50% of people with malaria receive the recommended antimalarial medicine.
 - Only 50–70% of people with pneumonia are treated with correct antibiotics.
 - Up to 60% of people with viral infections receive antibiotics incorrectly.
- 3** Our animals, farmlands and our food are all involved in creating more antimicrobial resistance.
- 4** We start dying again from what used to be 'easy to treat' diseases. Every year, lack of access to adequate and affordable treatment contributes to the deaths of:
 - more than 3 million children with serious bacterial infections of the respiratory system
 - 1.4 million people with TBIncreased resistance to drugs that support the immune system in patients on ARV treatments is also hindering efforts to treat many people living with HIV and AIDS effectively.



Action on Antibiotic Resistance

www.reactgroup.org