



Solving for Antimicrobial Resistance

A Rising Global Health and Humanitarian Crisis

January 2025

Introduction



On November 12, 2024, the Global Coalition on Aging and the Acton Institute brought together senior clergy, scientists, G7 leaders, patient advocates, and private-sector innovators at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in Vatican City for an international symposium, “Solving for Antimicrobial Resistance: A Rising Global Health and Humanitarian Crisis.”

This meeting featured presentations and remarks on the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the need for health innovation from leaders such as **Mons. Renzo Pegoraro**, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy for Life; **Mons. Robert Vitillo** of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development; **Takuko Sawada**, Director and Vice Chairperson of the Board of Shionogi; **Damiano de Felice**, Chief of External Affairs of CARB-X; **Konrad Reinhart**, Founding President of the Global Sepsis Alliance and President of the German Sepsis Foundation; **John Alter**, Head of External Affairs of the AMR Action Fund; **Robin Hiley**, Composer, Lyricist and Producer of LIFELINE; **Francesca Manno**, Director, Department of Treasury of the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance; **Joël Denis**, Director General, Centre for Vaccine and Therapeutics Readiness of the Public Health Agency of Canada; **Laurent Muschel**, (Acting) Director-General of the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, European Commission; **Atsutoshi Hagino**, Delegate of the Ambassador of the Embassy of Japan to the Holy See; **Amy Delgado**, Veterinary Epidemiologist of the United States Department of Agriculture, and **Bill Pullman**, Actor and AMR Advocate.

The statement that follows was discussed at the meeting, producing five key messages on AMR that highlight the humanitarian, ethical, and economic issues of this escalating health challenge of our 21st century and the required responses by global leaders.

Five Key Messages on AMR

1. The time to act on AMR and antimicrobial innovation is now.

These are well-understood problems with well-understood solutions, including pull incentives. G7 and EU Governments are encouraged to act now on innovation, regulatory reform, and education on stewardship and appropriate use.

Policies to increase vaccination uptake must also be prioritized as preventative measures are essential to preserving the effectiveness of both newer and older antimicrobials. A One Health approach to combat AMR in coordination with a broad range of stakeholders is critical to tackling AMR as a global public health threat.

2. AMR is not just an infectious disease problem.

Our entire system of modern medicine is at risk.

If resistance continues to grow, and innovation continues to stall, we will no longer be able to safely treat cancer, do surgeries, or perform countless other medical procedures. Hospitalization itself is being undermined. Our response to this problem must be commensurate with its impact.

3. The G7 and the EU should prioritize development of new antibiotics to protect the world against rising levels of resistance.

The immunocompromised and the soon-to-be 2 billion older adults globally are at greatest risk.

Push and pull incentives are effective ways to fix the broken marketplace and sustainably produce new antimicrobials, and should be implemented widely throughout the G7 and EU – building off of the Political Declaration of the 2024 United Nations High-level Meeting on AMR. Pull incentives are particularly needed.

4. The problem of AMR and its consequences are still not widely understood.

The media, the arts, and religious institutions are essential to build broader awareness of AMR.

While experts understand the issues, we need greater public engagement and education to support appropriate use, help to address health disparities, and push towards effective solutions.

5. The Catholic Church plays a tremendous role in the fight against AMR.

The Church is a convener, a shepherd of communities, and an educator.

By leading these actions in communities around the world, the Catholic Church can draw greater attention to this health crisis, which is destroying lives, families, and communities – with the greatest toll on the most vulnerable.



Statement on the Path to Solving for Antimicrobial Resistance

Antimicrobials are foundational to modern medicine. They have revolutionized human health, extending the promises of healthy longevity across the world. However, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a grave threat to humanity. As existing medicines become ineffective against disease-causing microbes and fatal infections, we find ourselves living in a world of growing risk and increasing health disparities that demand urgent, sustained action from the world's leaders.

AMR affects us all, but it does not affect us all equally. People with otherwise healthy immune systems, access to stable, sustainable healthcare, and a wide range of antimicrobials are less threatened by AMR than the rest. For millions of others, routine treatments are increasingly unsafe, undermining efforts to expand longevity for all. Problems like sepsis caused by community and hospital-acquired infections are rising. As AMR worsens, we are on the threshold of returning to a world without antimicrobials. It is estimated that 39 million people will die of AMR over the next 25 years. Mortality from AMR among older adults has increased by 80% over the last 30 years.¹ Those most vulnerable in society face the greatest risk – the ill, the economically disadvantaged, the marginalized, and those without access to healthcare. This inequality will only grow if we allow the problem of AMR to persist without action. As the Holy See conveyed in its statement to the 2024 High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance at the United Nations, we must commit to overcoming inequalities in healthcare.² Pope Francis has frequently argued that inequality is one of the contributors to social injustice.³

Yet there is hope in the struggle against AMR. Innovative health products to diagnose, prevent, and treat drug-resistant diseases can provide much-needed solutions to the AMR crisis. New antimicrobials will always be needed because bacterial resistance is a natural phenomenon that inevitably occurs over time. It is therefore important to create hospitable policy and financing conditions for the development of these innovations. The G7 has committed to implementing a coordinated set of push and pull incentives, using public financing to support R&D and procure antimicrobials regardless of sales volume, thereby ensuring a sustainable supply of new, innovative medicines for everyone without encouraging overuse. It is time to act on this idea. Pull incentives, for example, ensure a market for more effective, innovative pharmaceuticals, and present an opportunity for justice and equity in the health sector. Collective efforts by G7 countries and by the European Union to develop a solution to the antimicrobial innovation crisis offer hope for a future in which everyone has access to effective antimicrobials. The UK, Japan, Italy, and Canada have started, or are working toward, implementing this idea. In the US, the PASTEUR Act has been proposed, which could greatly help to solve this problem if enacted. We must all go further and faster.

As the Book of Tobit reminds us: “To all those who practice righteousness give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it” (4:6). Let us today raise our voices to demand the development of the arsenal of medicines that protect against infectious disease for the benefit everyone in our world, regardless of the resources available to them.

Expert Participants

The Global Coalition on Aging (GCOA) would like to thank the AMR Action Fund, Sanofi, Shionogi, and Pfizer for the partnership in organizing the November 12 symposium on AMR. We also wish to thank the following experts for their participation in the symposium, and for their invaluable contributions that made the creation of this statement possible. The content of this statement was discussed at the symposium, but should not be understood to represent the exact views of any single workshop participant or to be endorsed by them.

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GCOA represents a cross-section of global business including technology, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, home care, financial, transportation, and consumer sectors. We engage global institutions, policymakers, and the public to drive debate on, create, and promote innovative policies and actions to transform challenges associated with the aging of the global population into opportunities for social engagement, productivity and fiscal sustainability.

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