

## How can we make medicines work again?

Written by Cristian-Silviu Buşoi on 12 December 2016 in Opinion  
Opinion

There will be a global health crisis if AMR isn't tackled urgently, warns Cristian- Silviu Buşoi.



Cristian- Silviu Buşoi | *Photo credit: European Parliament audiovisual*

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Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is an increasingly serious threat to global public health that requires the development of new antimicrobials and a coordinated global response. Nevertheless, there are large gaps in the research on AMR if the emerging challenges are to be addressed.

According to the World Health Organisation, AMR takes place when microorganisms change upon exposure to antimicrobial drugs. As a result, the medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of contagion.

According to the WHO's 2014 global report on surveillance on AMR, the results are worrying, unless stakeholders take major actions to improve efforts to prevent infections and to change the paradigm

of production, prescription and use of antibiotics.

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AMR affects everyone's health in a way that no single disease does and it is a particularly serious problem for patients whose immune system is compromised and for patients in critical care units. Resistant pathogens lead to higher healthcare costs because they often need drugs that are more expensive and require extended hospital stays.

However, healthy people are also at risk if we consider that a child with an ear infection that in the early 1990s would have been instantly cured by penicillin, whereas now they may need two, three, or four courses of different drugs.

Patients' access to medicines should be supported throughout the whole lifecycle of molecules, because several obstacles still exist to capture the full potential of incremental innovation, notably related to known non-patented molecules.

These days, what is worrying is that doctors in Europe and worldwide sometimes face situations where infected patients cannot be treated adequately because, the responsible bacterium is perfectly resistant to available antibiotics.

We are now facing a crisis in the public health system and it is time to take stronger action worldwide, by strengthening existing prevention and supporting innovation plans. The European Parliament has repeatedly called for the creation of an appropriate EU legislative framework that would promote the development of new antibiotics.

In October 2016, the European Commission published the evaluation of their action plan against the rising threats of antimicrobial resistance. This has concluded that actions to address the problems identified in 2011 were relevant and are still relevant today.

The Commission intends to continue its fight against antimicrobial resistance with its second action plan, taking the form of a Commission communication to the Parliament and the Council and it will focus on supporting member states.

Member states should find a balanced approach between access to treatment and reward for innovation. For this scenario, national governments should consider assessing investment needs for implementation of their national action plans on antimicrobial resistance.

In order to ensure safer care for patients, the Commission, together with the Parliament and the member states, needs to adjust the regulatory environment to raise awareness about AMR, to prevent and control infections in hospital and healthcare facilities through technological solution and to allow early and equal patient access to novel treatments in each country in the EU.

## About the author

Cristian-Silviu Buşoi (RO) is Parliament's EPP group shadow rapporteur on safer healthcare in Europe: improving patient safety and fighting AMR

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