

## Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance

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### Preamble

We, the representatives of National Medical Associations across the Commonwealth, assembled in Chennai, India, during the 27th Biennial Conference of the Commonwealth Medical Association – on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024, recognize the critical and escalating threat posed by Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) to public health and global development.

This Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance reaffirms our unified commitment to combat AMR through coordinated, multisectoral efforts grounded in the principles of One Health and guided by the Sustainable Development Goals.

With this Declaration, we call upon Governments, Healthcare providers, and International agencies across the Commonwealth to join forces in combating AMR through sustainable policies, integrated stewardship, and enhanced infection prevention measures that will safeguard the health of current and future generations.

### Recognition of AMR Challenges

- We recognize that antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has escalated into a critical global health threat, undermining the effectiveness of life-saving treatments and driving rising rates of morbidity and mortality worldwide. Designated as a "silent pandemic" by the World Health Organization (WHO), AMR urgently calls for united international action (1).
- We reaffirm that AMR significantly impacts global mortality and morbidity, with an estimated 4.95 million deaths associated with drug-resistant infections in 2019 alone, 1.27 million of which were directly caused by AMR (2). The persistent rise of AMR results in prolonged illnesses, increased

patient risk, and heightened death rates, highlighting its severe human cost.

- We note that AMR imposes extensive economic burdens, impacting national economies and healthcare systems across income levels. The World Bank projects AMR could lead to an additional US\$ 1 trillion in healthcare expenses by 2050, with annual GDP losses ranging from US\$ 1 to 3.4 trillion by 2030 due to lost productivity, higher medical costs, and extended hospitalizations (3).
- We acknowledge that AMR challenges the progress of modern medicine, compromising essential treatments, such as surgical procedures and infection management. This rollback of medical advancements not only risks current health outcomes but also threatens future innovations and resilience in healthcare.
- We recognize that AMR's impact spans across human and animal health, agriculture, and the environment, necessitating a robust One Health approach. AMR disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, such as children, the elderly, and immunocompromised individuals, underscores AMR as a critical issue of health equity and social justice.
- We emphasize that addressing AMR requires extensive collaboration across local, national, and global levels, engaging both public and private sectors to strengthen policy, enhance surveillance, and support antimicrobial stewardship. Collaborative efforts are crucial to creating resilient health systems equipped to manage AMR effectively.

- We note with concern that AMR mitigation efforts face significant barriers, including limited access to diagnostics, inadequate research funding, and low levels of public and professional awareness. These challenges call for innovative and scalable solutions that are adaptable across diverse regions to effectively reduce AMR's impact on health and society.

#### Commitments

1. We commit to prioritizing AMR awareness by embedding discussions and education around antimicrobial stewardship in national and state medical conferences and educational initiatives.
2. We are dedicated to advancing the "One Health approach" by fostering cross-sector collaborations with human health, animal health, and environmental sectors to comprehensively address AMR challenges.
3. We pledge to implement robust infection prevention and control (IPC) measures in healthcare facilities to reduce the transmission of drug resistance microbes and limit the necessity for antimicrobial use.
4. We commit to advocating for responsible antimicrobial prescribing practices among all healthcare professionals to curb unnecessary and inappropriate use.
5. We commit to supporting Global and National AMR surveillance systems to monitor antimicrobial resistance patterns and inform policies based on real-time data and emerging trends.
6. We are committed to enhancing antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) education through the inclusion of structured AMS modules in medical training curricula and continuous professional development programs.
7. We pledge to work toward the development and dissemination of evidence-based treatment guidelines for infections across healthcare settings, ensuring the prudent use of antimicrobials.
8. We commit to encouraging community-level AMR awareness campaigns to educate the public on the responsible use of antimicrobials and the importance of IPC in preventing infections.
9. We commit to collaborating with international and local regulatory bodies to strengthen and enforce guidelines restricting over-the-counter antimicrobial sales.
10. We commit to fostering research and innovation in developing new antimicrobials, diagnostics, vaccines, and AMR mitigation strategies, aligned with the specific needs of Commonwealth Nations.
11. We are committed to improving access to quality, affordable diagnostics, and antimicrobial therapies to ensure equitable healthcare and address AMR challenges comprehensively.
12. We commit to advocate for dedicated funding within national health budgets specifically allocated for AMR initiatives in alignment with National Action Plans to support implementation, surveillance, and public health interventions.
13. We pledge to engage with and support policy advocacy for AMR containment at local, national,

and international levels, ensuring AMR is a priority in health policy agendas.

14. We are committed to enhancing WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) standards in healthcare facilities and communities to minimize the spread of AMR through contaminated environments.
15. We pledge to identify AMR coordinators within each National Medical Association to guide and monitor AMR initiatives, ensuring that the Commonwealth countries progress in unity against AMR.
16. We commit to actively involving youth in the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR), recognizing that today's young professionals will be tomorrow's leaders in public health.
17. We are committed to facilitating the enhancement of laboratory infrastructure and diagnostic capabilities across Commonwealth countries, supporting timely and reliable AMR detection and surveillance.
18. We commit to implementing and promoting evidence-based infection prevention protocols to reduce surgical site infections, ensuring safer surgical practices, and minimizing the need for postoperative antimicrobial use across Commonwealth healthcare facilities.
19. We commit to adopting and promoting the WHO AWaRe (Access, Watch, and Reserve) classification of antibiotics to guide responsible antibiotic use, prioritize the use of Access group drugs (at least 70% of total antibiotic consumption), and minimize the overuse of Watch and Reserve antibiotics, thereby enhancing antimicrobial stewardship across Commonwealth countries.

#### Call to Action

1. Appoint one AMR coordinator from each National Medical Association within 30 days to liaise with CMA on Commonwealth-wide AMR activities.
2. Form a Standing Committee for Antimicrobial Resistance under each National Medical Association within 3 months, ensuring junior doctor representation.
3. Recognize AMR and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) as primary focus areas and showcase the Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance (CAMP AMR) and the AMR Standing Committee on the National Medical Association's website within 3 months.
4. Establish formal partnerships with the veterinary, environmental, and agricultural sectors of respective countries within 6 months to address AMR jointly.
5. Lobby for the inclusion of AMR as a dedicated topic in the undergraduate and postgraduate medical curriculum in each country.
6. Request each National Medical Association to advocate for earmarked funding for AMR-related activities from their respective Governments within 6 months.
7. Allocate at least one session on AMR in the upcoming National Annual Conference of each National Medical Association and continue this annually.

1. Organize a joint celebration of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week across Commonwealth countries from November 2025 onwards.
2. Encourage the National Medical Associations to promote the publication of at least one AMR-related article per issue in the respective National Medical Journals.
3. Virtually convene CAMP AMR members biannually to review AMR progress and strategize future actions.

#### **CONCLUSION**

We, the representatives of the National Medical Associations of the Commonwealth countries, hereby reaffirm our commitment to this Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance. Recognizing AMR as one of the most formidable global health threats, we pledge to work together, guided by the principles of One Health and in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals, to advance initiatives that will curb the spread of AMR and safeguard the health of all across the Commonwealth.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

To effectively mitigate the escalating threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), it is recommended that National Medical Associations (NMAs) immediately operationalize the framework provided by the Commonwealth Declaration. NMAs must prioritize the adoption of the WHO AWaRe (Access, Watch, Reserve) classification to ensure that at least 70% of antibiotic consumption is derived from the "Access" group. Furthermore, achieving long-term sustainability requires integrating AMR and antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) into both undergraduate and postgraduate medical curricula while aggressively lobbying for earmarked national funding to support these critical public health interventions and surveillance systems.

#### **RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

The Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance serves as a pivotal instrument in addressing

what the World Health Organization designates as a "silent pandemic". With AMR associated with approximately 4.95 million deaths in 2019 alone and projected to impose an additional \$1 trillion in healthcare expenses by 2050, this document provides a necessary, unified mandate for multisectoral action across diverse income levels. Its relevance lies in its robust "One Health" approach, recognizing that the crisis transcends human medicine to involve animal health, agriculture, and the environment. By aligning NMAs across the Commonwealth, the declaration champions health equity for vulnerable populations and safeguards the progress of modern medicine, ensuring that essential treatments and surgical procedures remain viable.

#### **AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION**

All authors have contributed equally.

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Nil

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There are no conflicts of interest.

#### **DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

The authors haven't used any generative AI/AI assisted technologies in the writing process.

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