

Uniting Global Forces Against the Silent Pandemic: The Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance

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INTRODUCTION

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a critical challenge to modern medicine, fundamentally undermining our ability to treat infectious diseases effectively(1). Antimicrobials, including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics, are essential for preventing and treating infections in humans, animals, and plants. However, pathogens can evolve over time, leading to resistance against these antimicrobials. This natural evolutionary process is drastically accelerated by the overuse and misuse of antimicrobials, rendering conventional treatments ineffective. As a result, infections become increasingly difficult to manage, escalating the risks of disease spread, severe illness, and mortality.

Antimicrobial resistance presents a major threat to global health, contributing to increased mortality and morbidity rates. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared AMR a "silent pandemic," emphasizing the critical need to tackle this issue(2). AMR poses a worldwide threat, with drug-resistant diseases claiming the lives of 4.95 million individuals in 2019, of which 1.27 million deaths were directly related to AMR(3). AMR adds to significant costs, for both health systems and national economies, posing a problem for all countries at all income levels. AMR creates the need for more expensive and intensive care, and affects the productivity of patients and caregivers through prolonged hospital stays. In response to the urgent need to address the growing burden of AMR, the Commonwealth Medical Association has spearheaded the launch of the Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance (CAMP-AMR). This initiative aims to unite National Medical Associations across the Commonwealth to collaborate on developing and implementing

sustainable strategies that tackle the pervasive issue of AMR. By facilitating international cooperation and shared expertise, CAMP-AMR seeks to enhance global and national efforts against AMR. While global initiatives like the Global Action Plan on AMR(4) provide a robust framework, CAMP-AMR offers a Commonwealth-specific mechanism to leverage shared cultural, professional, and structural similarities for targeted interventions.

Ongoing Efforts to tackle AMR: In a concerted effort to address the escalating crisis of antimicrobial resistance, pivotal meetings were convened globally, signifying a unified international response. The United Nations General Assembly organized a High-Level Meeting on AMR in New York during its 79th session in September 2024, emphasizing AMR as a borderless threat necessitating a collective response to safeguard global health, food security, and the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals(5). Concurrently, the 4th Global Ministerial High-Level Meeting on AMR, hosted in Jeddah from November 15-16, 2024, focused on solidifying commitments made during earlier discussions, including those at the UN meeting, and propelled a global call to action to tackle this urgent public health challenge(6).

Building on these international initiatives, the Indian Medical Association (IMA), representing the largest body of modern medicine practitioners in India with a membership of over 3.65 lakh modern medicine doctors, plays a critical role in the fight against AMR. The IMA operates across 28 State branches, 5 Union territorial branches, and 1702 local branches, making it uniquely positioned to effect change through a vast network of healthcare professionals(7). This large membership of the association drives action at grassroots levels. The IMA

has established an exclusive Standing Committee for Antimicrobial Resistance that actively contributes to shaping policies and strategies related to AMR. This committee coordinates with all 1702 branches to disseminate information, promote education, and advocate for responsible antimicrobial practices among healthcare providers. Regular AMR-related activities, organized by the IMA, include workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns, which are crucial for keeping the medical community informed and engaged with the latest developments and guidelines in AMR management. Moreover, the IMA leverages its extensive networks, including the Medical Students' Network and the Junior Doctors' Network, to involve younger healthcare professionals in AMR initiatives. Through these efforts, the IMA significantly amplifies the impact of global AMR strategies at a local level, demonstrating a committed approach to safeguarding public health against this growing threat.

Launch Event of CAMP-AMR: The Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA), established in 1962 with headquarters in London, serves as a unifying body for 56 member countries, dedicated to enhancing the capacities of National Medical Associations to foster health improvements across the Commonwealth. On November 9th, 2024, the CMA reached a significant milestone in its mission by hosting the launch of the Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance (CAMP-AMR) during its 27th Biennial Conference held in Chennai. This pivotal event was orchestrated under the leadership of the President of the CMA, in the esteemed presence of the Past President of the World Medical Association, Past Presidents of the CMA, office bearers of the CMA, and senior leaders from various National Medical Associations (Figure 1). The launch event was a focal point of the conference, highlighting the CMA's proactive stance against the global health threat of antimicrobial resistance. It provided a platform for significant dialogue and collaboration among healthcare leaders from across the Commonwealth.

Figure 1 : Launch of Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance



Signing of the Commitment Board: Following the formal launch of the Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance (CAMP-AMR), a significant moment was the ceremonial signing of the Commitment Board by the leaders of the alliance (Figure 2). This momentous act took place amidst the assembly of distinguished leaders from Commonwealth nations, who gathered to endorse and reaffirm their dedication to

a unified and vigorous approach against AMR. The Commitment Board, signed by the Presidents and senior leaders of various National Medical Associations, encapsulates a pledge to intensify efforts on several fronts.

The commitments outlined on the board include advocating and collaborating to prevent and contain AMR by supporting the implementation of National Action Plans on AMR. It stresses the importance of educating and empowering healthcare professionals to enhance infection prevention measures, improve surveillance, and optimize the use of antimicrobials. Moreover, the leaders committed to supporting initiatives that elevate AMR awareness and facilitate behavioral changes among healthcare providers, patients, and the general public across the Commonwealth. These actions are in alignment with the Global Action Plan on AMR(4), emphasizing a coordinated effort to mitigate the spread and impact of antimicrobial resistance globally.

Panel Discussion on AMR: A key feature of the CAMP-AMR launch was the panel discussion, which provided a global perspective on the challenges and strategies related to antimicrobial resistance. Leaders from seven different Commonwealth countries served as panelists, each sharing insightful updates on the status of AMR within their respective nations (Figure 3). The panel discussion was moderated by Dr Narendra Saini and the discussions covered a broad spectrum of strategies currently being employed to tackle AMR, highlighting both successes and ongoing challenges. Panelists elaborated on the various national initiatives and the role of National Medical Associations in combating this crisis. Furthermore, the dialogue underscored the importance of collaborative efforts under the CMA and CAMP-AMR frameworks, emphasizing how unified action can enhance the effectiveness of individual country efforts. This session not only facilitated an exchange of best practices but also strengthened the resolve to work collaboratively across borders to address the global threat of AMR.

Figure 2 : Signing of the Commitment Board by leaders across the Commonwealth



Figure 3 : Panel Discussion on Antimicrobial Resistance



Drafting the Roadmap: The Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance: The insights and discussions from the panel were compiled as the Commonwealth Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance. This comprehensive document not only encapsulates the shared understanding and commitments of member countries but also serves as a directive for concerted action against AMR. The declaration outlines specific calls to action, urging member countries to intensify efforts in surveillance, stewardship, and public awareness initiatives. Recognizing the dynamic nature of AMR and the need for adaptive response strategies, CAMP-AMR has established a protocol to convene quarterly online meetings. These sessions are designed to monitor progress, assess the effectiveness of implemented actions, and make necessary adjustments to strategies. This continuous engagement ensures that the Commonwealth's response remains robust and responsive to the evolving challenges of AMR, fostering a proactive approach to safeguarding global health.

CONCLUSION

The Commonwealth Alliance of Medical Professionals on Antimicrobial Resistance (CAMP-AMR) stands not just as a testament to international collaboration but also as a beacon of proactive response in the ongoing battle against antimicrobial resistance. The commitments made, outlined in the robust Commonwealth Declaration, represent a collective determination to elevate the fight against this global health threat to new levels of efficacy and urgency. The quarterly convening of CAMP-AMR is a mechanism designed to keep the momentum alive, ensuring that the calls to action are not only monitored but also adapted to meet emerging challenges and leverage new opportunities. Through sustained effort, vigilance, and shared expertise, CAMP-AMR aims to lead by example, inspiring nations worldwide to stand united in safeguarding the health of all populations against the silent pandemic of AMR. In doing so, CAMP-AMR embodies the hope and resolve of the Commonwealth Nations to preserve the efficacy of antimicrobials for generations to come, securing a healthier future for every global citizen.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

All authors have contributed equally.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are no conflicts of interest.

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