

Millions of wasted prescriptions adding to superbug threat, warns O'Neill

28 Oct 2015

The call for new rapid diagnostics to stop unnecessary use of antibiotics and tackle superbugs is one of the key issues being addressed at the forthcoming Bioinfect conference.

Lord O'Neill, chair of the UK government's Review of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), is speaking to policy makers, public health experts and senior executives from the pharma and animal health industries at the one day conference, which takes place at Alderley Park, Cheshire on November 10th.

His review team has just published its fourth paper on how to combat AMR, which currently claims 25,000 lives a year in the EU alone and has been likened to climate change and global terrorism in terms of the threat posed to public health. The O'Neill Review has already warned drug resistant infections will kill an extra 10 million people a year worldwide – more than currently die from cancer – by 2050 unless action is taken.

The Bioinfect conference will hear from Lord O'Neill that the world needs a step change in the way that technology is incorporated into the decision-making process around antibiotic use – whether that be in the home, the pharmacy, a doctor's surgery or hospital.

His latest report features examples of the scale of the mis-prescribing problem, citing the United States as typical of a modern health system. Looking at adult patients visiting the doctor to treat respiratory problems, one study found that more than two-thirds of courses of antibiotics were likely to have been inappropriately prescribed for conditions that were not infections at all, or infections caused by viruses – for which an antibiotic would do nothing. That amounts to 27 million courses of antibiotics wasted a year in just one set of indications, in the United States alone.

Bioinfect will also hear that more refined tests, able to identify the strain of bacterial infection and the antibiotics to which it is resistant or susceptible, will allow more precise prescribing of narrow spectrum antibiotics. This in turn reduces our dependence on broad-spectrum products, slowing the development of resistance and improving the treatment that patients receive.

The UK Review on Antimicrobial Resistance was established by the Prime Minister David Cameron in 2014. The head of the Review, Hala Audi, is also taking part in BioInfect, featuring in a panel discussion about business models.

Geoff Davison, CEO of industry group Bionow, which has organised the conference, said: We very much welcome the presence of Lord O'Neill and his team at BioInfect. The latest report demonstrates why healthcare systems are not embracing the use of rapid diagnostics that exist today and why investment in new and better ones is lagging. The review team is presenting a compelling case for governments and healthcare systems to support innovative rapid diagnostics.

The diminishing effectiveness of antibiotics threatens to take us all back to the dark ages

Neil Murray, CEO of Redx Pharma Plc, which has one of the UK's largest development programmes for new antibiotics, and who is also speaking at BioInfect, commented: The AMR review is doing a valuable job of engaging with a complex set of issues and finding constructive ways forward. The diminishing effectiveness of antibiotics threatens to take us all back to the dark ages, where a simple infection could prove deadly. BioInfect has an important role to play in helping share knowledge, foster collaboration and inspire the level of innovation required to tackle this multi-faceted problem.

Hosted by the industry group Bionow, BioInfect 2015 is now in its third year. Supported by the drug development consultancy Boyds, Shore Capital, Manchester Science Partnerships and Redx Pharma, the conference contributes to setting the international agenda regarding a new global health architecture, with new laws, regulations, governance mechanisms, and tools to get the issue under control. BioInfect takes place on November 10 at Alderley Park, Cheshire.



Lord O'Neill, Chairman of the AMR Review

Further details can be found at:

<http://www.bionow.co.uk/events/2015bioinfectconference.aspx>