

# O'Neill signs off with powerful plan to tackle superbugs

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**Redx Pharma Plc has joined voices from across the UK healthcare sector in welcoming the conclusions of the O'Neill Review into Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). The landmark report, published today, challenges governments, industry and the medical profession to get to grips with one of the biggest health threats facing mankind.**

Lord O'Neill was appointed by Prime Minister David Cameron to head the AMR Review in July 2014. His team has published a series of findings since then, including identifying that without action to counter AMR the current toll of some 700,000 deaths will accelerate to 10 million every year – more than currently die from cancer. The review put the cost in terms of lost global production between now and 2050 at a 100 trillion USD.

The review team has presented a compelling case for governments and healthcare systems to support new innovation.

Lord O'Neill's final report features a 10 point plan, with four interventions regarded as critical.

The first is a global public awareness campaign. Secondly, he wants the drug development pipeline reinvigorated – there has not been a new class of antibiotics for decades. To address this O'Neill has called for market entry rewards, of around one billion USD each, given to the developers of successful new drugs.

Thirdly, O'Neill has called for the use of antibiotics more selectively and said that he found GP prescribing habits incredible.

When a test is used to confirm the diagnosis – which happens in a small minority of cases – it is based on a technology that hasn't changed significantly since the 1860s. We need to break this cycle that leads to no innovation, said Lord O'Neill.

Fourthly, he wants a reduction in the use of antibiotics in agriculture. In the US, for instance, the report says more than 70 percent of medically important antibiotics are used in animals.

Neil Murray, CEO of Alderley Park-based Redx Pharma Plc, said: There can be no excuses from this point on – the health catastrophe unfolding around AMR has been set out clearly by the O’Neill Review team. There has been talk of the industry’s moral duty to address this issue but the responsibility falls on all members of society to ensure that we avoid the drastic consequences of antibiotics failing.

Lord O’Neill’s recommendations are profoundly insightful and are about achieving fundamental change. The pharma industry knows the challenges it faces and the recommendations around the Innovation Fund and new commercialisation models are a significant step forward. Critically, however, there is also a route map here for governments and the agencies governing both human and animal health around the world. Post-O’Neill, it is only with a new and collective sense of responsibility that we will have any chance of securing a safer future.

The North of England is set to be the location of a new AMR Centre, based at Alderley Park, Cheshire. It is expected to open later this year.



Lord O’Neill at BioInfect 2015

Dr Peter Jackson, chair of the steering group behind the centre, said: The AMR Centre Steering Committee welcomes the O’Neill Review and the continued global focus on tackling AMR. The report highlights the necessity for Governments

worldwide and industry to do more together to plug the innovation gap and develop new antibiotics as a priority.

A key reason for this gap as identified by the Review is the lack of seed funding for SMEs wanting to research new antibiotics, combined with the existing commercial models which do not incentivise research in this area.

The AMR Centre Steering Committee, made up of both public and private sector partners, has recently put forward a proposal to the UK government which will help to address this gap, using the state of the art facilities at Alderley Park as the base for research designed to achieve clinical proof of concept with at least one new antibiotic in the next five years.

Dr Peter Simpson, Director of N8 Research Partnership, which represents the eight most research intensive universities in the North of England said: We are delighted to see the UK continuing to lead in the anti-microbial resistance area with insight and action. The O'Neill Review into Antimicrobial Resistance has rightly identified the need for concerted action, including a need for more research funding and market entry rewards for AMR to kick-start innovative research into new antimicrobials and diagnostics.

We are keen to play our part in addressing this challenge. There is a wealth of relevant life sciences and drug discovery expertise within N8 universities' state-of-the-art assets, research expertise, and our experience in high value and effective collaboration with business. New anti-microbial research investments such as that at the Royal Liverpool Hospital, and the planned investment in a new AMR Centre to be based at Alderley Park will enhance this. The North of England is now going to become home to some of the most important work in tackling this global health threat.

Geoff Davison, CEO of the north of England industry group Bionow, which is hosting Bioinfect 2016, Europe's biggest conference focused on AMR, said: Lord O'Neill has demonstrated 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 has presented a compelling case for governments and healthcare systems to support new innovation.