18 November 2023, Cairo, Egypt – As World AMR Awareness Week 2023 begins today, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean emphasizes the urgent need to address the threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Antibiotic resistance threatens health care in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Drug-resistant infections are more and more common and are spreading faster. Misuse and overuse of antibiotics in humans, animals and food production settings lead to new resistance profiles. Antibiotics are being used instead of accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment and in the absence of effective infection prevention and control measures, such as clean water, sanitation and hygiene. This endangers people's well-being, puts a strain on health systems and, ultimately, wastes resources.

"Our medical care relies heavily on antibiotics: they must continue to be effective," highlighted Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. "We must safeguard the future of health care and guarantee the welfare of our communities. This means improving the way we prescribe antimicrobials."

Young medical professionals, who represent our future health workforce, will be most affected during their careers by a rise in drug-resistant infections. They are well placed to help improve antibiotic prescribing practices. WHO just released an antibiotic book to guide their use for over 30 common infections. Each antibiotic is classified according to whether they can be "Accessed", "Watched", or "Reserved. Adopting this "AWaRe" classification requires all actors of the health system.

"I am calling on all health workers to use antimicrobials responsibly and to prescribe antibiotics only when necessary as per national guidelines and the WHO AWaRe antibiotic book" added Dr Al-Mandhari. "I also urge the public to only take antibiotics when prescribed by a health professional. Health care workers and the public have the future of our antimicrobials in their hands. Seizing this opportunity is exactly what we mean by Health for All by All."

Note to editors

Antimicrobials, including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics, are medicines used to prevent and treat infections in humans, other animals and plants. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites change over time and no longer respond to medicines, making infections harder to treat and increasing the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

WHO has declared that AMR is one of the top 10 global public health threats facing humanity. The Third Global High-Level Ministerial Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance, held in Muscat, Oman, in 2022 led to Muscat Manifesto by which Member States committed to reducing antimicrobial use in animal health and food production and to more appropriate use of antibiotics in human health.

In addition to death and disability, AMR can lead to prolonged illness, longer hospital stays, the need for more expensive medicines, and financial challenges for patients.

For more information, view the WHO fact sheet on antimicrobial resistance .

World AMR Awareness Week 2023 website

Sunday 7th of July 2024 04:54:50 AM