

COVID-19 and AMR:

In what seems like just the blink of an eye since our last communication with you, the novel COVID-19 virus has become a global pandemic of unprecedented proportions. Reflecting on our collective work to combat AMR, we see many similarities between these efforts and what is now being done, with urgency, to address the COVID-19 pandemic. The AMR Global Action Plan, mobilized by the UN InterAgency Coordinating Group (IACG), prompted new guidelines, processes and programs for AMR that are also highly relevant for combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:

- Improving hygiene in communities and infection prevention and control in healthcare facilities to contain spread of COVID-19.
- Scaling-up rapid diagnostic testing, for COVID-19 to identify and isolate people who are infected, and for AMR to precisely identify the cause of infection in order to optimize treatment. Critically ill patients infected with COVID-19 are particularly vulnerable to secondary bacterial infections including drug resistant strains.
- Accessing and utilizing surveillance data to identify and monitor infection outbreaks, spread and trends, both at a population level and within healthcare systems and facilities.
- Increasing investment in drug and vaccine development pipelines. For AMR, the focus has been on developing new classes of antibiotics and solving critical market failures. For COVID-19, the focus is on development of novel treatment methods (such as antibody-based therapies) and vaccine candidates.

While the urgent and immediate threat of the novel COVID-19 virus is presently, and appropriately, occupying almost all of the attention and focus of governments, health ministries, public health agencies and hospital systems, our actions to combat AMR continue to be relevant, and are potentially leverageable to help address this unprecedented pandemic. We are all living in a truly unique time when citizens throughout every corner of the world are sharing common experiences, and awareness of disease transmission and infection risks have never been higher. Possibly these shared experiences will result in longer lasting appreciation among policymakers on the importance of investing in robust public health and healthcare delivery systems, including substantially strengthened disease prevention capabilities, and among the general public on the need to engage in safer hygienic practices.

For those of you who work in healthcare and public health, we extend our most heartfelt appreciation for all that you are doing to combat COVID-19 on the front lines. It is at times such as these that everyone in the world understands just how essential your commitment is, and how many sacrifices you are making to protect the well-being of others.

Share Your Story and Become an Antimicrobial Resistance Fighter