



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Antimicrobial Stewardship

Policy Position Statement

Key messages:

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the world's most pressing public health crises, and is a national health and potentially a national security priority.

The WHO AMR Global Action Plan 2015¹, Quadripartite One Health Joint Action Plan 2022 -2026² and Australia's National AMR Strategy – 2020 and beyond³ and One Health Master Action Plan⁴ call for a One Health approach to tackle increasing resistance to antimicrobial agents, the spread of resistant microbes and integrated surveillance and response to resistance and usage.

PHAA supports the global and national One Health AMR strategies, including provisions in the pending Pandemic Accord, providing advocacy for action and commitment to intersectoral collaboration on this complex issue.

Key policy positions:

1. Increase awareness within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region that AMR is one of the top 10 threats to global public health.⁵
2. Support the implementation of a One Health approach to monitoring and surveillance of AMR and antimicrobial use (AMU) through an integrated National One Health Surveillance System.
3. Promote judicious and responsible use of antimicrobial agents in the human, animal and plant health sectors and promote Antimicrobial Stewardship campaigns including appropriate disposal of unused and expired antimicrobial agents by households, medical facilities, veterinary premises and in animals.
4. Support the 7 key objectives of *Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2020 and Beyond*³ and associated One Health Master Action Plan⁴ priority areas especially those relating to public health and National One Health Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.
5. Advocate for intersectoral collaboration and coordination between human health, animal health, agriculture and environment sectors to implement the National AMR Action Plan, and the development of the Australian CDC.

Audience:

Government policymakers and program managers, PHAA members, relevant stakeholder groups and media.

Responsibility:

PHAA One Health Special Interest Group

Date adopted:

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Antimicrobial Resistance and Stewardship

Policy position statement

PHAA affirms the following principles:

1. There is a need to improve coordination, communication and cooperation across sectors and agencies working to implement the Australian AMR Action Plan, including through the provision of regular feedback to stakeholders.
2. Risks and impacts of AMR must be measured in terms of danger to health and welfare of animals and plants as well as humans.
3. There are opportunities for Australia to learn from local and international lessons and adopt effective interventions.^{6,7,8}
4. By identifying and reviewing the evidence on behaviours and behavioural context that drive AMR in Australia and internationally, we can help find appropriate interventions to change behaviour⁹.

PHAA notes the following evidence:

5. The efficacy of antimicrobial agents (including antibiotic, antiviral, antifungal and antiprotozoal) that are critical tools for the prevention and treatment of disease associated with infections in humans, terrestrial and aquatic animals, and plants, is reducing. Antimicrobial resistance is found in countries of all income levels, with common diseases becoming untreatable and lifesaving medical procedures riskier to perform.^{6,7}
6. AMR is a serious global threat requiring a coordinated multi-sectoral response by human health, animal health, agriculture, food, and environment sectors.^{6-8,10}
7. Drug-resistant bacterial diseases already cause at least 4.95 million deaths globally a year⁵.
8. AMR is affecting our ability to achieve universal health coverage and health-related sustainable development goals.¹³
9. Antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) is based on appropriate prescription, optimised use of antimicrobials, quality diagnosis and treatment, and reduction and prevention of infections.⁹
10. The quadripartite alliance (WHO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and United National Environment Program (UNEP) has united to combat AMR through the development of the Quadripartite One Health Joint Action Plan with action track 5 – curbing the silent pandemic of AMR².
11. The Australian Strategic and Technical Advisory Group (ASTAG) on AMR is Co-Chaired by the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer of Australia. ASTAG includes members with expertise from across the fields of human health, animal health, food, agriculture, and the environment. Through its membership, it will strengthen links between governments, industry, professional bodies, and other key stakeholders, to support a coordinated and sustainable response to AMR.

12. The Return of Unwanted Medicines (RUM)^{14,15} project, which safely collects expired and unwanted household and pet medicines from the general public via community pharmacies, has helped establish a practicable means of proper disposal and destruction of antimicrobials¹⁶.
13. The 2020 update of the strategy – National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy - 2020 and Beyond³ – proposes to develop a One Health AMR website as a central repository for information and resources for professionals and consumers.
14. To better interpret risks and impact on the public, AMR data must be comparable and gathered using standardised methods. Implementing this policy would contribute towards the achievement of [UN Sustainable Development Goals 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing](#).

PHAA seeks the following actions:

15. Encourage and promote a better understanding of the extent of AMR and antibiotic use across sectors¹⁷ by promoting a national one health surveillance system that is funded appropriately and incorporates sectors beyond human health (AURA).¹⁸
16. The 7 objectives for the One Health Master Action Plan for Australian AMR Strategy 2020 and Beyond should be implemented by the end of 2025:
 - a. Clear governance for AMR initiatives.
 - b. Prevention and control of infection and the spread of resistance.
 - c. Greater engagement in the combat against resistance, including the development and implementation of a coordinated One Health communication strategy as well as National One Health monitoring and evaluation framework to support whole-of-society awareness and behavioural change.
 - d. Appropriate usage, disposal, and stewardship practices.
 - e. Integrated surveillance and response to resistance and usage.
 - f. A strong collaborative research agenda across all sectors; and
 - g. Strengthen global collaboration and Partnerships.

PHAA resolves to:

17. Advocate for the above steps to be taken based on the principles in this position statement.
18. Promote information on AMR awareness, surveillance, and interventions to PHAA members and World Federation of Public Health Associations.
19. Promote new approaches in resistance investigation like Whole Genome Sequencing to better understand microbial populations and mechanisms of resistance and transmission to assist in detection and response.
20. Promote engagement of the environment sector in establishing baseline data to better understand the role environmental AMR microbes and their elements contribute to upstream and downstream AMR challenges.
21. Advocate for a One Health approach in preventing further development of AMR and spread, that acknowledges the different sectoral contexts including First Nation communities.
22. Advocate for dedicated funding to support implementation of the NAP (National Action Plan).

23. Stimulate more awareness among the people about responsible usage and disposal of antimicrobial agents.
24. Hold the Government to the commitments they have made in the implementation plan for the *National AMR Strategy 2020 and Beyond*.

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(First ADOPTED 2017, revised 2020, 2023)

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