

2021 Declaration of the European Patient Group on Antimicrobial Resistance

Executive Summary

We, the members of the European Patient Group on Antimicrobial Resistance¹ (AMR Patient Group), are truly committed to raising awareness about the real-world impact of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). Consequently, we strive to help reduce the inappropriate use of existing antibiotics, promote antimicrobial stewardship and infection prevention and control measures across Europe, and develop novel antibiotics where needed. The purpose of our 2021 Declaration is to empower European citizens and patients to speak with one voice when sharing personal and group insights and experiences regarding the real-world impact of AMR and HAIs. The Declaration further calls upon European and national authorities to embrace its policy recommendations. It is now more urgent than ever to step up actions to prevent HAIs and the related development of AMR throughout the patient journey.

The latest European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) data² on AMR in 2019 demonstrate that AMR remains one of the biggest threats to public health today and a challenge for Europe. For instance, the percentages of resistance to vancomycin – a last-line antibiotic – in *Enterococcus faecium* bloodstream infections almost doubled between 2015 and 2019. Resistance to carbapenems – another group of last-line antibiotics – remains a serious concern.

Indeed, even as we continue to develop new and effective antibiotics, appropriate antimicrobial stewardship of existing antibiotics as well as regular diagnostic testing remains highly important. Moreover, well known preventive measures in health care including behavioural compliance in hand hygiene, checklists and safety protocols as well as the implementation of digital technologies remain crucial to prevent and control infections. Using antimicrobial sutures and bundling care in major surgeries could reduce adverse events including surgical site infections and thus reduce the potential of developing antimicrobial resistance.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need to understand the complex connections between bacterial and viral infections³. AMR will likely increase through the heavy use of antibiotics in COVID-19 patient treatment. Hence, the importance of diagnosing, encouraging

¹ <http://healthfirsteurope.eu/topic/amr-patient-group/>

² <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/antimicrobial-resistance-and-consumption-remains-high-press-release>

³ <https://www.jpiaamr.eu/considerations-for-antibiotic-resistance-in-the-covid-19-pandemic/>





a more responsible behaviour and promoting the optimal prescription and sustainable use of antibiotics. As a result, there will be stronger preparedness for our healthcare systems and timely responses to this public health challenge.

AMR is not merely a health issue but also encompasses economic and social considerations. Ensuring good governance as well as increasing public healthcare expenditure, investment and financial incentives to research and develop innovative technologies and treatments are all necessary to reduce AMR.

AMR is driven by interrelated dynamics in the human, animal and environmental health sectors, hence the importance of implementing national “One Health” action plans against AMR.

Drug-resistant infections know no borders – they can easily cross from humans to animals and spread from one geographic location to another.

[We, the undersigned, call upon European policy makers and national governments to urgently commit to a full range of interventions in the field of education, prevention and investment in order to:](#)

1. Increase awareness and understanding of AMR and HAIs and stimulate debate on both public health challenges through effective communication, education and training at all levels. This will be key to promoting behavioural change among veterinary and health personnel that will lead to further compliance with evidence-based guidelines;
2. Establish and promote clear governance arrangements at the local, national and European levels to ensure leadership, engagement, accountability and coordination of actions to combat AMR and HAIs;
3. Improve infection prevention and control measures across human health and animal care settings to help prevent infections and the spread of AMR;
4. Relentlessly advocate to put in place and monitor national targets for the surveillance of antibiotic use in human and animal health, as well as infection surveillance standards at European level;
5. Promote equitable access to appropriate treatments in primary and secondary care settings at both European and national levels;
6. Implement antibiotic stewardship programmes in primary and secondary care settings with active engagement of patients as well as communicate infection risk, rates and prevention measures in a transparent manner;
7. Invest in and promote the use of medical technologies in preventing AMR and HAIs, leading to better patient outcomes and generating cost savings for hospitals, health systems and society at large;



8. Support the creation and promotion of awareness raising activities (lectures, communication tools, lay language AMR data presentations through infographics) to disseminate recent statistics and patient experiences. This serves to highlight the impact of AMR and HAIs and promote behavioural change by healthcare professionals and patients towards the prudent use of antibiotics.

Key messages and actions

The members of the AMR Patient Group invite the European decision-makers to endorse the policy proposals enshrined in this document and call on Member States and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that measures to combat AMR and HAIs are swiftly implemented.

Simultaneously, we invite European patient associations to promote this Declaration and recommend the following actions be taken in the field of education, prevention and investment at national and European levels:

	Patients / General population	Health care professionals	National level	European level
Education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise awareness on AMR and HAIs both in the community and in healthcare facilities through educational programmes addressed to the general population. 2. Share accessible information to bring behavioural change in terms of infection prevention and control and to encourage a responsible use of antibiotics. 3. Tackle vaccine hesitancy to prevent bacterial and viral infections from occurring and spreading. 4. Share patient experiences to increase patient awareness of AMR's impact on citizens' lives. 5. Establish a patient AMR app enabling the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Educate to build consensus around evidence-based guidelines such as the WHO guidelines, and define clear protocols to prevent AMR/HAIs. 2. Raise awareness about AMR and HAIs through clear messages addressed to patients, to encourage the responsible use of antibiotics. 3. Provide training courses and mutually beneficial educational activities to boost healthcare professionals' skills and competences. 4. Create peer to peer exchanges among health care workers to learn about the techniques utilised in other European countries, potentially through a digital, interactive platform in each country. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote awareness-raising campaigns and sharing patient experiences to increase patient awareness of AMR's impact on everybody's life and consumer products. 2. Develop national training and education programmes on the responsible use of antibiotics at university level. 3. Recognise that better community-based monitoring systems are essential to track antimicrobial consumption. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Champion awareness-raising campaigns on AMR and the responsible use of antibiotics and HAIs and their impact on society (people affected + social cost). 2. Encourage public health messages to promote a cultural change in patient behaviour towards antibiotic misuse and healthcare professionals' roles and responsibilities. 3. Facilitate the exchange of best practices among European countries on actions taken to reduce AMR and HAI.



	<p>patient to ask questions to qualified healthcare professionals.</p> <p>6. Encourage better animal husbandry practices under the “One Health approach” to bring benefits both in terms of animal welfare and food production.</p>			
Prevention	<p>1. Promote best practices with increased hand hygiene campaigning and infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes.</p> <p>2. Encourage local advocacy groups to use digital checklists.</p>	<p>1. Encourage the creation of antibiotic stewardship teams in primary care, healthcare and hospital facilities.</p> <p>2. Promote best practices on the impact of communication skills and the adoption of tools to help guide antibiotic therapy in primary and secondary care and manage the patient push for antibiotics.</p> <p>3. Measure levels of compliance within hospitals through benchmarking systems and safety checklists.</p>	<p>1. Encourage and support Member States to put in place and monitor national targets for the surveillance and reduction of AMR & HAIs through holistic action plans under the “One health” approach.</p> <p>2. Enhance good practices via a dedicated platform.</p> <p>3. Develop a better understanding of the barriers and solutions to introducing point of care testing for certain bacterial infections in primary care settings.</p> <p>4. Monitor levels of IPC compliance within hospitals (and out of hospital) through dedicated commissions, including healthcare professionals and patients’ representatives.</p> <p>5. Show the financial impact and improvements at the country level (as e.g., world meter).</p>	<p>1. Develop ambitious, country-level targets and benchmarking of data to better analyse the incidence of AMR and HAIs.</p> <p>2. Disseminate good practices to promote animal husbandry, including aquaculture and livestock farming systems and feeding regimes which support good animal health and welfare.</p> <p>3. Help to address patient safety in hospital environments by supporting good practices in infection prevention and control as well as the uptake of medical technologies for IPC and HAIs prevention.</p> <p>4. Promote the development by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) of evidence-based guidance on infection control as well as best practice sharing between European countries.</p>



<p>Investment</p>	<p>1. Invest resources to collect and share patient experiences so as to increase patient awareness of AMR's impact on the life of all citizens and on consumer products.</p>	<p>1. Invest in AMR surveillance programmes for clinicians and public health officials to evaluate the nature and scale of emerging resistance at all levels of governance.</p>	<p>1. National investment in healthcare infrastructure and personnel, surveillance and monitoring systems, laboratory equipment, awareness-raising and professional training funded by a dedicated European AMR fund. This fund should be assessed in relation to national targets.</p> <p>2. Invest in R&D and adopt new technologies to help patients following antibiotic therapy in primary care.</p> <p>3. Promote the use of rapid diagnostic technologies in screening programme guidelines for drug-resistant bacteria, and for IPC programme guidelines for HAIs reduction.</p> <p>4. Use horizon-scanning tools to facilitate the development of clinical evidence for rapid diagnostics.</p> <p>5. Use reimbursement systems to facilitate the uptake of innovative technologies in national healthcare systems.</p> <p>6. Ensure healthcare facilities comply with national and EU antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) and IPC recommended standards in terms of human and capital resources (currently understaffed) through <i>ad hoc</i> funding.</p>	<p>1. Create a European monitoring programme capable of tracking the implementation and the use of rapid diagnostics as well as the use of medical technologies for IPC tools and outcomes in European healthcare systems.</p> <p>2. Enable the uptake of innovative technologies combining IPC and HAIs prevention value (investment in wound care management, vascular access management, temperature management and hygiene assurance).</p> <p>3. Implement award systems (honorary and monetary) for healthcare facilities that introduce and promote innovative IPC practices and AMS programs that involve patients.</p>
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Signing organisations - Members of the AMR Patient Group



Association Vie Et Cœur



**Bulgarian Association
for Patients Defence**



Foro Español de Pacientes



Health First Europe



**International Alliance of
Patients' Organisations**



Fondazione the Bridge



Lotta alla Sclerodermia



Malta Health Network



**National Association for
Patient Participation**



The Patients Association



**Pelvic Pain Support
Network**



**Save Liver Associations
for Patients**



Respiriamo Insieme



**Uniamo: Federazione Italiana
Malattie Rare**



Karkinaki



Rete Pazienti Esperti

For more information, please contact Health First Europe at secretariat@healthfirsteurope.org