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Super bug resistance set to create ‘medical dark ages’ says AMA

The Australian Medical Association says in a new report released today, that resistance to super bugs and other antimicrobials has become an existential threat which must be addressed.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said resistance to antimicrobials, including antibiotics, was being accelerated through globalisation, overprescribing in the human health and animal health industries, climate change, and the lack of progress in developing new effective drugs.

He said the world, including Australia, was heading for the medical dark ages if the problem was not addressed, with antimicrobial resistance set to become a leading cause of death by 2050.

The report, [*Antimicrobial resistance: the silent pandemic*](#), has been released to coincide with World Antimicrobial Awareness week.

“The report argues unless there are a number of changes within government and industry we are headed for the medical dark ages,” Professor Robson said.

“We are on track to return to a time where a superficial scratch could be life threatening, and the procedures and treatments which we now rely on are considered too risky to perform, due to risk of untreatable infection,” he said.

“Antimicrobial resistance is one of the most serious global health threats of the 21st century, documented in almost all regions of the world. Many consider it to be a silent global pandemic that will undermine healthcare systems and food safety and supply, and result in millions of deaths.”

Antibiotic resistance is one of the leading causes of death due to non-communicable disease globally, associated with almost 5 million deaths in 2019, with studies suggesting it could be responsible for 50 million deaths each year by 2050.

“It’s critical we address this, as it adds a significant burden to our already overstretched health system. Here in Australia, it’s estimated that antibiotic resistant infections add an additional \$10,000 to the cost of treatment,” said Professor Robson.

Professor Robson said the Federal Government now had an opportunity to work with the scientific and medical research community to combat super bugs through the establishment of a new Centre for Disease Control.

“The new CDC must be a recognised separate authority from government which will provide national scientific leadership and coordination of diseases and health threats.

“To ensure Australia’s response to antimicrobial resistance is effective, there must also be integrated, alignment to One Health objectives which are the recognition of the interconnectedness between human, animal, and environmental health.

Professor Robson said there urgently needed to be a massive improvement in the antimicrobial market through sovereign manufacturing of antimicrobials and implementing mechanisms to incentivise research and development.

“While Australia, as a wealthy developed nation, should be a global leader, we are lagging in areas such as public awareness and understanding, stewardship, research and development, and One Health governance,” Professor Robson said.

“The best evidence we have is that by 2050 the annual impact of antimicrobial resistance on the Australian economy will be \$142–283 billion, and \$80–90 trillion globally. This is not something we can wait to address — the stakes for all of us are far too high,” he said.

[Read the research report](#)

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