I’m encouraged to see growing interest in antimicrobial resistance (AMR) – a major challenge identified by the World Health Organization as one of the three major threats to global healthcare.

Sandoz recently arranged a media briefing to draw attention to this critical subject, with keynote speaker Lord Jim O’Neill, the author of the UK government-commissioned Review on AMR. The briefing took place on the same day that London’s Science Museum opened an exhibition exploring the topic, in parallel with other activities to raise AMR awareness during World Antibiotic Awareness Week.

But, while it’s good to see increased awareness, we still have a long way to go. The facts speak for themselves. Every year, 700,000 people worldwide die because of AMR and Lord O’Neill’s review concluded that we could see an additional 10 million deaths every year by 2050 unless we act now. Meanwhile, two thirds of people still believe that antibiotics can treat a cold or flu.

So now is the time to get serious about this very real threat: both driving awareness and working across sectors to adapt to the new realities. Our families and loved ones rely on us to do so.

We’re all in this together

At the media briefing, Lord O’Neill revisited his powerful ‘ten commandments’ of effective AMR policy spanning a range of areas, from improving sanitation infrastructure and creating new medicines to ensuring the appropriate use of antibiotics in humans and livestock. One need he highlighted was the need for rapid diagnostics to help reduce the tendency to simply prescribe antibiotics before a more precise investigation is carried out.

We need to act together to ensure that actions are complementary rather than duplicative or conflicting. That means we need: sustained global and national leadership; commitment from all stakeholders, including the public and key players in healthcare, agriculture, business and civil society; and coordination and collaboration across sectors, particularly between human and animal health and agriculture. The need for sustained commitment and action cannot be over-emphasized because this is not a one-time battle, but a long-term challenge.

A unique window of opportunity
As the leading global provider of generic antibiotics, Sandoz is committed to improving global access to medicine. Our parent company Novartis, one of 130 companies to sign the ‘Davos Declaration’ in January 2016 calling for a collective response to AMR, is also one of 13 companies to sign the subsequent ‘Industry Roadmap’ in September 2016, outlining concrete actions across four areas: access, responsible use, responsible manufacturing and R&D.

We’re equally committed to ensuring the responsible use of medicine. This may mean making some tough business choices as we balance short and long term interests, but we are not alone. Let’s be clear: AMR is a truly global problem, which requires global, multi-stakeholder collaboration.

There are no simple, quick-fix solutions. But with rising political attention and a pledge from industry to play a meaningful role, we have a unique window of opportunity to take concrete steps to combat this growing global threat. Let’s do the right thing, together.


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