

AMR to kill more than cancer: dental organisations heed the call to 'Educate. Advocate. Act Now!'

Infections which are resistant to treatment by antibiotics already kill more people than malaria and HIV/Aids, and on the current rate of growth will kill more people than cancer within the next 25 years.



United Nations headquarters in New York; courtesy of Anfaenger/Pixabay

This stark projection of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) illustrates the scale of the global problem which was the subject of a UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting in September.

AMR leads to antibiotics no longer being effective in treating or preventing infections, and is already restricting the ability to treat and prevent infections for some people. Ultimately, it may restrict the safe delivery of major surgery, chemotherapy, organ or stem cell transplants. AMR brings serious consequences for everyone.

World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) – 18-24 November - was set up by the World Health Organisation ten years ago and has since been broadened to encompass human, animal, plant and environmental health. Twenty national dental organisations have come together to support the WAAW 2024 theme, '**Educate. Advocate. Act now.**'

Since the dramatic increase in dental prescribing of antibiotics during the COVID-19 pandemic, NHS dentistry has seen a year-on-year reduction. Further work is required so that everyone plays their part in keeping antibiotics working, by ensuring use only when strictly necessary.



The recently updated [Dental Antimicrobial Stewardship Toolkit](#) provides free resources:

- **Educational** resources and guidance for dental teams.
- **Advocacy** resources for raising patient awareness raising about AMR.
- **Action**-focused tools, including audit tools and a new approach to personal development planning for all dental team members.

By using these resources, the profession can support delivery of the UK’s second national action plan on AMR, which was published earlier this year, and dental practice owners and managers can also help demonstrate compliance with the [Health and Social Care Act 2008: Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections](#).

Dr Wendy Thompson FCGDent, the College of General Dentistry’s AMR Lead, attended the recent UN meeting on AMR in New York:

“Dental professionals can help preserve the life-saving effectiveness of antibiotics for the health of our patients and for future generations. On behalf of all the organisations supporting this campaign, I urge colleagues to use the resources in the toolkit to ensure that they are only prescribing antimicrobials when strictly necessary, and to educate patients on the risks to themselves and wider society of unnecessary use of antibiotics. Please do what you can – Educate. Advocate. Act now!”

References:

HM Government (UK). Policy paper: Confronting AMR 2024-2029. 8 May 2024.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-5-year-action-plan-for-antimicrobial-resistance-2024-to-2029/confronting-antimicrobial-resistance-2024-to-2029>

United Nations, Political declaration of the High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance. <https://www.un.org/pga/wp-content/uploads/sites/108/2024/09/FINAL-Text-AMR-to-PGA.pdf>