**Antibiotics  Access and Excess**

*Editorial by Liselotte Diaz Högberg, Deputy Director of ReAct*

ReAct’s vision is that current and future generations of people around the globe will have access to effective treatment of bacterial infections as part of their right to health. Working towards this goal means addressing both the problem of excess use to preserve the effect of existing drugs, but equally addressing the reverse problem of limited access in other settings to make sure that these potentially lifesaving drugs reaches those who need them the most.

New figures from Unicef show that only around 40 percent of children under five in sub-Saharan Africa with suspected pneumonia are taken to an appropriate health care provider, a proportion that has hardly changed at all during the last six years.

Antibiotic use in these children is in many countries reported to be as low as 10%.

Even worse, we have to remember that these figures give us no information whether they are receiving *effective* antibiotics.

We know that resistance to cotrimoxazole, one of the most commonly used drugs to treat pneumonia is high in many populations, hardly being more effective than a sugar pill.

For neonatal sepsis, another urgent global health problem, up to 70% of all infections have been estimated not to respond to the WHO recommended first-line treatment.

Access to more expensive second- and third line alternatives that are still effective is limited for a large proportion of people.

This raises an important question. When discussing and measuring access to treatment of bacterial infections, should we be satisfied with merely counting those treated?

Or should we focus on what really matters, access to treatment that works? If so, antibiotic resistance can no longer be ignored.

---

**EPN call to Action**

**Antimicrobial Resistance Workshop in Moshi, Tanzania in November 2008**

The ReAct partner Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network (EPN) organized a 5 day workshop in Moshi, Tanzania "Workshop on local and regional actions to address the problems with antimicrobial resistance."

The highly appreciated work-shop was attended by representatives from member organisations in 11 countries in Africa. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Orient the staff of EPN member organisations on the serious threat posed by Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)
- Orient participants on the advocacy and containment actions to address this threat
The thinking behind the dialogue was inspired by the report ‘Ending the War Metaphor: The Changing Agenda for Unravelling the Host–Microbe Relationship’, organised by the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academy of Science; and by emerging scientific and artistic experimentation with bacterial art and ideas for learning from bacterial organisation.

The need for a new paradigm has become more urgent as the predominant metaphor of war, enemy and antibiotics as the main weapons against them, is inaccurate and inadequate as a response to the serious threat of antibiotic resistance. The Wee Jasper dialogue was intended to give fresh attention to the creation of new concepts and methods and allow them space and time to grow naturally.

Participants found that many shared a similar sense of limitation about the current paradigm. It takes time for images to develop and come to a mature expression and avoid cliches.

They all agreed that the interaction should continue and a full report from the meeting will be made available on www.reactgroup.org

Re-imagining bacteria, infection and the body

A dialogue between scientists and artists, 5-9 Dec 2008 at Wee Jasper, Australia
By Mary Murray, Olle Nordberg and Satya Sivaraman

From 5 to 9 December 2008 a group of artists, scientists, social activists and journalists gathered at Cooradigbee Homestead, Wee Jasper in New South Wales, Australia, to begin a special mission. Set amidst open green pastures over spectacular undulating terrain and home to some of the globe’s oldest fossil finds, their task was to pull together ideas from a wide range of human endeavours with the common purpose of re-defining the perception of microbes in the present world to evolve new images and metaphors of the dynamic relationship between microbes, human beings and other species.

The need for a new paradigm has become more urgent as the predominant metaphor of war, enemy and antibiotics as the main weapons against them, is inaccurate and inadequate as a response to the serious threat of antibiotic resistance.

The Wee Jasper dialogue was intended to give fresh attention to the creation of new concepts and methods and allow them space and time to grow naturally.

Participants found that many shared a similar sense of limitation about the current paradigm. It takes time for images to develop and come to a mature expression and avoid cliches.

They all agreed that the interaction should continue and a full report from the meeting will be made available on www.reactgroup.org.