TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR HEALTH

Tackling antimicrobial resistance
a story of a community playing its part

You too ... can take action!

So you see my friend, there is a lot for people to learn about their health and using medicines the right way.

Oh yes, nurse Waja. Thank you for teaching me. I will go and tell my friends!!
Antimicrobial treatment is a major lifesaving intervention for infectious diseases but Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) is rapidly reducing the effectiveness of antimicrobials. As a result, many first line treatments for diseases such as malaria, TB and opportunistic infections of AIDS are no longer effective and the cost of care is inevitably increased.

The spread of antimicrobial resistance is a global problem with particularly dire consequences for Africa which is grappling with high levels of infection in the face of limited resources. Poor quality medicines, inappropriate use of medicines, as well as poor hygiene and waste management, all facilitate the development of resistance. This means treatments with antimicrobials such as antibiotics, antifungals and antivirals are no longer effective.

The containment of antimicrobial resistance requires an increased awareness by all actors in health, including the public, as well as collective action. These comic strips were developed by EPN to provide information to the general public, through graphic art. This edition and the previous 2 volumes are also available in French and Kiswahili.

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At the bus stop

"My little one has diarrhoea! I hope the bus comes quickly so I can get some antibiotics.

How ironic, I was in your shoes a few days ago. But now I know better...

What do you mean?

"We have just returned from GSH. Nathan here had acute diarrhoea. Antibiotics are not the solution. You need to rehydrate the baby.

How do I do that?

Prepare a solution with 6 teaspoons of sugar, half a teaspoon of salt mixed in 1 litre of clean boiled water and give the baby 2 teaspoons per kg body weight every time he runs.

At the village market

"Hi mama Babie, it’s been long! What happened to your foot?

I struck my foot against a stone two months ago. It was a minor bruise but now the wound is serious and getting worse.

Have you seen a doctor?

"No, but I bought cream and 3 courses of different antibiotics so far, but the wound is not responding!

This is my friend mama Babie, please have a look at her leg. She says the wound is not healing even after taking 3 courses of antibiotics in the past month.

You seem to be in luck, here comes my neighbour, she’s a nurse at Good Samaritan Hospital. She’s very helpful.

You should have gone to the hospital for a proper diagnosis. Self-medication is dangerous and can make it worse. Even antibiotics won’t work anymore. Here, go to the Good Samaritan Hospital immediately and give Dr. J this note. He’ll help you.

Thank you nurse Waja. I’ll go there immediately.

Oh, and I was forgetting. Nathan was also given these zinc sulphate pills to take for 14 days.

And what!? I have never heard of that. What are they for?

They help protect him so that if he gets diarrhoea again it won’t be so severe. You may have to get some for your baby.

Mama Babie, have you been feeling any other unusual symptoms lately?

I’ve been getting very tired and thirsty lately but I thought it was the strong antibiotics that my daughter sent me from the city. And eugh, I’ve also been having persistent vaginal itching.

My sister, thank you meeting you today was such a blessing!

Marie Babie...
Tackling antimicrobial resistance - Diabetes

Mama Babie, I must say you’re very lucky to have met nurse Waja this morning. Your blood sugar is very high. Nurse Waja was right to suspect diabetes. We’ll run additional tests tomorrow morning to confirm this.

Diabetes! How can that be? I thought these were minor symptoms and a bruised foot.

With the right medicine and a proper diet you will be back to your active self in no time. Make sure you get professional advice from now on. Self medication can alleviate some of the symptoms but cover up the underlying disease, with irreversible consequences.

I will be sure to advise my friends who are doing the same thing.

Three weeks later

Yes, I am much better. My wound is healing. I have to change my eating, reducing things like potatoes, bread and even fat. I take a tablet every day to keep my blood sugar low.

Tackling antimicrobial resistance - Childhood pneumonia

In a small village

Hello sisters, I am just running to get some cough mixture and antibiotics. She is coughing heavily.

They got infected in school. My son Tom had a cough and fever recently.

I bought a syrup and gave him some leftover antibiotic tablets from my cupboard. 3 days later my little boy was so bad that I rushed to the Good Samaritan Hospital. Nurse Waja was really cross with me. I can’t believe it. She is such a nice person. What happened?

By the time we got there his breathing was so bad. Nurse Waja said I waited too long.

Oh dear.

So what should I do now? It takes me another hour to get to the GSH.

They also said that I used the wrong antibiotic and gave the wrong dose. Even the cough mixture was not for his age. It seems I really didn’t know what I was doing. He could have died.

If Wangeci has the same infection as Tom, you better see a professional. You can go to the health center in the next village. It’s not far.

Good idea. Let me go then. Goodbye.

Let me know if they were able to help!
Tackling antimicrobial resistance - Childhood pneumonia
Tackling antimicrobial resistance - The importance of hygiene

At the GSH outpatient department

David has a fever, 39.8°C. I think he is suffering pneumonia. I remember you have been here at OPD several times with either infections of the chest or diarrhoea!

That’s true. I’ve come here many times. It’s expensive, because our village is far from here.

Do you use the dam as a water source? It is probably used by the animals, and I can’t imagine it is clean water.

It is not really clean, but I boil it before I use it for cooking or drinking.

Our hands can transport a lot of germs which cause diarrhoea and chest infections. After going to the toilet, before preparing food, before eating, everybody has to wash their hands with soap. Soap makes it easier to remove grease and dirt which carry germs.

The water in our dam is always brown and animals drop all into it. Sometimes I can’t even find enough wood for cooking and for boiling the water.

The dam can be a source for spreading germs. What about a latrine and a place for washing hands after!

We live at a small farm. We grow vegetables and keep goats. There’s a small dam nearby for water.

We lost too many children. A few months ago, I convinced my husband to get a wheelbarrow. We have 3 neighbours who share it to transport good water from a well 2 kilometers away.

We talked about washing fruits and vegetables well, after we have washed our hands properly, also how to store food and cover it against insects. Nurse Waja also advised to wash dishes and pots with hot water and soap. I even made my own fly trap out of an old plastic bottle!

That’s very important. There is a small latrine. But the children don’t like using it.

We also invited nurse Waja to meet with the women to advise us. She explained to always use soap for hand-washing, and inspired us to talk to our husbands to get latrines built.

Then we discussed cooking:

Cooking! Every woman can cook.

Just call me, All the best, see you.

I am coming. Oh Mama Abi it was really good to learn from you. I will call you. Maybe you can advise us in the village.

Please mama Abi, the doctor wants to see you and David.

If that, why he is getting sick so much? If soap can make such a difference, I will do my best to buy it!

Mama Abi, David seems to be quite sick. What happened?

He is suffering a chest infection and has a high fever. Nurse Waja took some samples for the lab. I have to wait for the results...

Wasn’t it only 2 weeks ago that he was suffering diarrhoea?

Oh he has been sick so often in his young life, I am afraid. Our neighbour lost her youngest child because of a chest infection. But nurse Waja has now advised me to buy soap to avoid him getting sick.
Much later, at Obi’s drug shop

Brother Obi, my husband is in a lot of pain; give me another bottle of magnesium citrate, a better one this time. The one I took yesterday morning has finished.

This is the third time you’re buying a bottle of antacids this week. Are you sure he is suffering from acidity?

I also worried but he doesn’t want to go. We have already spent a lot of money because baby David has been sick a lot.

The charges at Good Samaritan Hospital are friendly and besides, buying medicines that don’t even seem to work is also expensive.

You are right. I’ll convince him to go to hospital immediately.

Selfmedication is becoming a norm in this community. Something needs to be done.

Later that day, in Dr J’s office

Mama Abi, for how long has he been complaining of pain?

The pain started some time last year. Taking antacids used to help him but it doesn’t work anymore.

Abdominal pain can have many causes. We need to look into the stomach with an endoscope and take some tissue for the lab to see the cause of his pain. In the meantime he’ll be admitted and started on painkillers.

I wish we came here sooner. This seems to be worrying.

A few days later, the results are in

This patient has a tumor in his stomach. It is a miracle he walked into the hospital. Unfortunately the results show it’s cancerous and at an advanced stage.

I wish he had come in sooner. Instead of taking antacids for a year, this would have been detected and the prognosis would have been better.

Two days later

I was a fool taking antacids for so long and not going to see a doctor. I had a tumor. I could have died!

Now it turns out I am suffering from some sort of infection. It will need antibiotics.

The results of the lab are promising for both of you. Papa Kondyjeni, you will be discharged tomorrow and Papa Abi at the weekend.

We hope you have learned how dangerous selfmedicating can be. One of our community workers would like your help in an awareness campaign.

Let us inform the wife about this diagnosis. He has to go to theatre for surgery tomorrow.

My friends, I want to organize community meetings where you will tell your story about how could have died if you had continued to be your own doctor.

Count me in! I’ve seen the light.

Yes! We need to help others before someone dies.
On a Sunday afternoon
Thanks for inviting us. We haven’t talked for a long time, your youngest is such a cute boy.

It’s my pleasure hosting you here in my house.

Oh, no! Child, stop, don’t spill that!!!

A few weeks ago the nurse at the health centre gave me a syrup against the infection for Nathan. She told me I have to keep it even in the fridge.

Some medicines, often liquids, are even more sensitive to high temperatures. It is like food. Some last long, others go bad very fast.

You are right. Some medicine can be used only a short time, others last very long. My husband gets all his tablets for his high blood pressure once a month.

Always check the expiry and the way to keep the medicine on the label.

Nathan, you are not supposed to take this! It’s very dangerous! Dear Lord!

Thanks for your fast reaction. Medicines can be very dangerous for children...

Did you hear the story of Mercy? Her 2 year old daughter got hold of the grandfather’s pills. She took 8 and died on the way to the hospital.

Oh, what a sad story. My doctor prescribed me that antibiotic. I keep it in my handbag.

Sometimes I have tablets left. They are old and the expiry date is already past. What should I do?

My friends, I did not think that I have to organise my medicines in such a complicated way!

Medicines can help us a lot. But if we don’t handle them properly, they will not work anymore.

My friends. Medicines should be handled with care. All medicines should be clearly labelled, stored in the original package we received, properly closed, and kept in a cool, dry, and dark place in the house. Heat, sun and moisture can make them not work or go bad.

Then where can I find a safe place to put our medicines?

You have a nice small and cool store room with only a small window. You can use a tiny cupboard kids cannot reach, and store the medicine there.

What a serious topic we have this afternoon! If Nathan hadn’t grabbed that pill, we wouldn’t have discussed so long about medicines.

But you see, it is really important to take such matters seriously. We, the women, have to take a lot of responsibility for the family.

Thank you very much for your visit. We should keep in touch and meet again soon!

Bye! Take care!

Tackling antimicrobial resistance - Keeping medicines in the home
30 years of strengthening pharmaceutical services in church health systems

Professionalism and good governance
Institutional strengthening through capacity building and distribution of tools to impact governance
Training on pharmacy for health facility staff as well as provision of guidelines and standards to strengthen pharmacy practice

Access to medicines
Addressing supply systems, medicine use, quality of medicines, pharmaceutical care and affordability

Campaign against antimicrobial resistance
Activities on rational use of antibiotics and implementation of hospital-based infection control interventions reached more than 500 health professionals in 9 countries in 2010.

HIV and AIDS
Treatment Literacy Guide for Church Leaders available in English and French.
EPN also offers Treatment Literacy Courses for Church Leaders on invitation from any church or other group.

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