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ROUNDTABLE ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

Summary Report of the Discussions

Introduction

1. The 51st Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization provided an opportunity for Member States to analyze and discuss the impact of antimicrobial resistance on public health, as well as the interventions that should be carried out to minimize the consequences of this threat for infectious disease control.

2. This roundtable took up the theme of World Health Day 2011: *Antimicrobial resistance: No action today, no cure tomorrow*, which underscores the importance of containing antimicrobial resistance and promotes the adoption and enforcement of measures to reduce and prevent the spread of drug-resistant forms of often fatal diseases.

Summary of the Justification

3. The Member States and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau have been aware of the importance of this issue for over a decade. The 41st Directing Council adopted Resolution CD41.R14 (1999), *Emerging and Reemerging Infectious Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance*, which urges the Member States "to review the policies and legal mechanisms governing the rational use of antimicrobials, with a view to introducing changes aimed at controlling the growth of resistance to these drugs (paragraph 1.c). In Resolution WHA58.27 (2005), the World Health Assembly, requested the Director-General to accelerate the implementation of resolutions WHA51.17 (1998) and WHA54.14 (2001) concerning the containment of antimicrobial resistance and health security by expanding and strengthening the provision of technical support to Member States. Resolution WHA51.17 urged the Member States to adopt measures to encourage the appropriate and cost-effective use of antimicrobial agents; to develop measures to

prohibit the dispensing of antimicrobial without a prescription or the prescription of a qualified health care professional; to improve practices to prevent the spread of infection and thereby the spread of resistant pathogens. It also urged countries develop sustainable systems to detect antimicrobial-resistant pathogens and monitor volumes and patterns of use of antimicrobial agents and the impact of control measures. In resolution WHA60.16, the World Health Assembly requested the Director-General to strengthen the leadership and evidence-based advocacy role of WHO in promoting rational use of medicines and supporting countries in the implementation of national programs.

4. In the roundtable discussion, the ministers of health had the opportunity to discuss the impact of antimicrobial resistance from different perspectives: social and economic impact; epidemiologic information and its potential use; and containment methods. The conclusions of these discussions will furnish guidance for strategies and activities whose object is the containment of antimicrobial resistance. In order to facilitate the ministries' exercise of governance, on World Health Day WHO introduced a policy package that provides the framework for specific interventions: (a) Commit to a comprehensive, financed national plan with accountability and civil society engagement; (b) Strengthen surveillance and laboratory capacity; (c) Ensure uninterrupted access to essential medicines of assured quality; (d) Regulate and promote rational use of medicines, including in animal husbandry, and ensure proper patient care; (e) Enhance infection prevention and control; and (f) Foster innovations and research and development for new tools.

5. Doctor Patrick Kelley, Director of the Board on African Science Academy Development of the United States Institute of Medicine, made the opening address of the roundtable. In his presentation, Dr. Kelley showed how antimicrobial resistance impacts morbidity and mortality from noncommunicable diseases, as well as health care costs. This, coupled with the dwindling development of new antimicrobials, underscores the need for complex interventions to contain resistance that include surveillance, control of healthcare-associated infections, the selection and quality of drugs, the rational use of antimicrobial drugs in the livestock industry, and community education.

Results of the discussions on the health, social, and economic impact of antimicrobial resistance

6. Some of the direct and indirect costs of antimicrobial resistance were presented to the Member States. The direct costs that were noted include longer hospital stays, greater use of second- or third-generation antimicrobials, the search for and diagnosis of resistant strains to detect their spread, and containment and isolation measures. The indirect costs are the economic burden on the patient and his family caused by additional days of lost work, the patient's loss of health and longer periods of disability, as well as the loss of

drug efficacy and confidence in the health system. The Member States recognized that they had not managed to identify all the costs.

7. Some Member States mentioned the problem of access to health, since fragmented health systems manage the problem of hospital infections differently and access bears some relation to the development of resistance. Some countries have experienced a significant increase in outbreaks with deaths related to hospital infections caused by multiresistant bacteria. Even though some countries have legislation designed to limit the use of antimicrobials by requiring their sale by prescription only, this is difficult to enforce in practice. It is therefore necessary for legislation to be more rigorous in controlling the use of antimicrobial drugs, their prescription in outpatient facilities and the community, length of treatment, and dosage, in addition to having rapid diagnostic kits to support the proper prescription of antimicrobial drugs and encouraging other infection control measures, such as handwashing, surveillance, and rapid post-diagnosis isolation.

8. The Member States also expressed interest in monitoring the use of antimicrobial drugs with livestock and the need for cost-benefit analyses that show the effects of using these drugs in the sector and their cost to human health. The human health sector has already recognized the dangers of the improper use of antimicrobials in humans, and the livestock sector must also recognize the risks. Tougher regulations must be adopted for the livestock industry in terms of restrictions on antimicrobials and the conditions of their use, in addition to surveillance mechanisms that respond to these issues.

9. Some countries have successfully implemented measures to reduce the unnecessary use of antimicrobials. They include reducing the prescription of these drugs in treatments considered not clinically indicated, mass communication strategies to reduce improper use of antimicrobial drugs by the general public, and the implementation of an information system to assess the impact of the measures adopted. Moreover, some Member States have adopted strict measures to control resistant bacteria, with a consequent reduction in their spread and in antimicrobial resistance in some marker pathogens.

10. When antimicrobial resistance is not controlled, the measure to combat it, especially in outbreaks, are excessively expensive, and the expenditures usually come out of a national budget, draining resources that would otherwise be allocated to other areas of public health. The Member States expressed interest in learning the steps that PAHO/WHO is taking to combat antimicrobial resistance, as well as its measures to safeguard the efficacy of these medicines. PAHO/WHO is willing to set guidelines for aligning country contributions by preparing a strategy with regional guidelines for the containment of antimicrobial resistance.

Results of the discussions on the extent of antimicrobial resistance in the Region and its trends

11. The Vice President of the Directing Council opened the discussions on the progress and challenges in monitoring antimicrobial resistance in the Region. He noted that surveillance is necessary for defining strategies and the sources of funding for their implementation and for developing strategies and policies for antimicrobial resistance containment. The presenter, Dr. Mario Raviglione, described the WHO global policy package, launched within the framework of World Health Day, supporting his comments on the proposed policies with examples from different regions and diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, as well as pathogens such as *Shigella* SPPS and methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. These examples are the product of successful laboratory-based surveillance systems whose data have been used in decision-making.

12. The Member States voiced concern that some countries of the Region have no representative data on antimicrobial resistance. This is a red flag about the capacity and reliability of the information from the microbiology laboratories, which must meet international quality standards.

13. Concerning the use of the information from the microbiology laboratories, participants mentioned the importance of having national and supranational reference laboratories that support analysis and the detection of emerging resistance mechanisms, and whose information results in greater capacity in the laboratory network and sound decision-making. They furthermore stated that electronic systems for monitoring both resistance and the use of antimicrobials have proven useful.

14. Antimicrobial drug committees, created by government mandate, are a mechanism that facilitates the use of information on antimicrobial drug resistance for policy-making aimed at containment. The political will, formalized through ministerial agreements, has been key to promoting the rational use of antimicrobials, which implies training health workers and educating the community. Some Member States shared successful experiences in regulating the dispensing of antimicrobial drugs, based on evidence and surveillance data.

Results of the discussions on a multifaceted approach to contain antimicrobial resistance

15. The Vice-President of the Directing Council provided a brief introduction to the topic. This was followed by the presentation of Dr. José Orozco, representative of the organization ReAct Latin America, who stated that, even though we have a great deal of knowledge about antimicrobial resistance and considerable progress has been made, it is not enough, and an innovative, holistic approach is needed that includes social, economic,

political, cultural, and geographical aspects, along with the active participation of the community and primary health care services. He underscored the importance of developing a different approach to the problem of antimicrobial resistance; understanding social determination processes and acting on them; improving knowledge and technical tools in communication and education; creating autonomous forms of community participation based on working in networks; and training and contributing to research on new antimicrobial drugs, involving not only industry and academia, but the regulatory authorities as well.

16. During their deliberations, the Member States mentioned the importance of this issue in the countries and of the design of regional and subregional policies. For example, aligned with the objectives of the Pan American Network for Drug Regulatory Harmonization (PANDRH), CARICOM recently included the strengthening of regulatory mechanisms and their harmonization in its policy, along with the training of health professionals and the procurement of quality medicines.

17. The delegates also voiced the need to prepare pharmaceutical and prescribing guidelines for antimicrobial drugs at the different levels (primary, secondary, and community) and to combat self-medication through educational interventions whose targets include consumers, improve the quality of antimicrobial drugs, and regulate the distribution of free samples of antimicrobial drugs by the pharmaceutical industry.

18. The countries expressed an interest in receiving PASB support in the consolidation and strengthening of their regulatory authorities. Although many countries in the Region have legislation on this subject, there is for countries that have been successful in their application and enforcement to share their experiences. It is also important to strengthen the infrastructure for infection control at the hospital and community level. Thus, it is necessary to support the preparation of a regional plan that considers all the issues mentioned above.

Results of the discussions on recommendations that the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and Member States will implement

19. Antimicrobial resistance poses a threat to health that entails a high social and economic cost and demands a multisectoral response. The government’s steering function is therefore key to success. In practice, this response begins with a legal, political, and regulatory framework that encompasses all aspects of the antimicrobial use cycle, laboratory surveillance of resistance, and the control healthcare-associated infections. Implementation of this framework should involve the sharing of successful experiences and good practices and cooperation among the Member States.

20. The Member States requested the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to prepare a regional strategy and plan of action for the containment of antimicrobial resistance that will serve as a guide for national policies and operating plans and will be presented at the next meeting of the Governing Bodies.

21. This document contains the results of the work in the Roundtable and is presented for the consideration of the Directing Council, so that it can determine the next steps to take in the coming months to efficiently tackle the challenge of antimicrobial resistance to public health.

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