



World Health  
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WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH  
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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



## #AfricaWAAW

Twitter chat, 21 November 2020

18:30 SAST, CAT | 19:30 EAT | 17:30 WAT, CET | 16:30 BST | 12:30 EST

## How can we improve awareness for antimicrobial resistance in Africa?

**Date:** Saturday, 21 November 2020

**Time:** 18:30 SAST, CAT | 19:30 EAT | 17:30 WAT, CET | 16:30 BST | 12:30 EST

**Hashtag:** #AfricaWAAW

**Moderator:** [@hcsmaFRICA](#) ([Vanessa Carter](#))

Join us for a 60-minute Twitter chat to share your views about how we can increase awareness for antimicrobial resistance in Africa. All stakeholders including healthcare professionals, civil society, policymakers, journalists, nurses, medical researchers, IT experts, veterinarians, pharma, students etc. locally and globally are welcome. The public transcript will be recorded by [Symplur](#).

To participate, use the hashtag #AfricaWAAW

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### QUESTIONS:

T1: Why is it important to improve awareness about antimicrobial resistance in Africa?

T2: Which stakeholders matter in controlling antimicrobial resistance?

T3: How do you think we can improve awareness of antimicrobial resistance among all stakeholders?

T4: What barriers make it difficult to improve awareness about antimicrobial resistance in Africa?

T5: How would you describe antimicrobial resistance to others? (e.g. another language, or plain language)

CT: Do you have anything you want to add about antimicrobial resistance awareness in Africa?

We encourage you to take the Antibiotic Guardian Pledge for Africa <https://antibioticguardian.com/africa/> and tweet your pledge at the end of the twitter chat.

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#### **TOPIC:**

During this 1-hour Twitter chat, the Africa Union, Africa Regional Tripartite (FAO, OIE and WHO) and UNEP want to hear your thoughts about how we can increase awareness for antimicrobial resistance in Africa.

#### **How can we increase awareness for antimicrobial resistance in Africa?**

[World Antimicrobial Awareness Week \(WAAW\)](#) which takes place between 18 – 24 November 2020 aims to increase awareness of global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections.

#### **What are antimicrobials?**

Antimicrobial medicines are different types of drugs that can be grouped according to the microorganisms they treat. For example, antifungals kill fungi, antibiotics are used for bacteria, antivirals treat viruses and antiparasitic drugs kill parasites. We rely on these medicines for a wide range of conditions and diseases including for cancer treatment, to prevent infections after routine surgery or more extensive procedures like organ transplants, prevent and treat malaria and other types of zoonotic diseases such as Lyme disease which is caused by tick bites, listeria found in food products like unpasteurized milk or sandwich-meat, in dentistry, for urinary tract infections, some respiratory infections like pneumonia or TB as well as for sexually-transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and maternal and newborn health. Since the first antibiotic drug class called Penicillin was discovered in 1928 by Sir Alexander Flemming, antimicrobial drugs have saved billions of lives and are the cornerstone of modern medicine.

#### **What is causing antimicrobial resistance?**

Antimicrobial Resistance occurs naturally over time and most often through genetic changes. Most microorganisms have used their survival mechanisms (genetic changes) to resist the effect of antimicrobials. Since the discovery of these miracle antimicrobial drugs, overuse and misuse in the human, animal and environmental health sectors as well as agriculture have led to an increase (upsurge) in the selection pressure leading to resistance. An example of misuse is when a specific class of antimicrobials known as an antibiotic is prescribed for the common cold or flu while the flu or the common cold are not caused by bacteria but rather viruses. Antibiotics are only effective at treating bacterial infections therefore in this case we end up taking them unnecessarily. In the animal sector, antimicrobial drugs are being misused for various purposes including growth-promotion, a practice used to increase weight gain of animals and not to treat diseases. The natural phenomenon of microbial adaptation to survive antimicrobials, enhanced by the overuse or misuse of antimicrobial drugs is known as antimicrobial resistance and the microorganisms that become resistant are called “Superbugs”.

#### **What types of superbugs should we be worried about?**

An example of a superbug commonly found in hospital settings, as well as in the community and in livestock is Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). *Staphylococcus aureus* is a common type of bacteria that lives on our skin and on mucosal surfaces such as our noses, even in healthy

people, but when *Staphylococcus aureus* develops resistance against a type of antibiotic called Methicillin, that drug will no longer be effective in treating it. There are countless more types of superbugs including drug-resistant tuberculosis, drug-resistant typhoid fever, *Clostridium difficile* (C.diff) and Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB), a type of bacteria commonly found in the environment, especially in soil and water.

### **How can we slow down antimicrobial resistance?**

Microbes are part of nature and live all around us, some of them even live harmoniously inside our body, but every now and again a bad one can cause an infection or disease. One of the most important things we can do besides reducing the overuse and misuse of antimicrobial medicines is to practice good hand hygiene. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights some important lessons around infection prevention and control (IPC), one of which was handwashing to reduce the spread of the virus. That same principle should be used as we tackle the spread of deadly superbugs. Self-medicating or sharing antimicrobials like antibiotics with others without the guidance of a qualified medical professional can also put the user at a higher risk of developing resistance and at some point, when their life depends on those drugs, they might not work. Understanding that different antimicrobial drugs treat different types of microorganisms help us understand why a particular type of drug like an antibiotic was not prescribed. This is why it is critical to seek the advice of a qualified health professional before using antimicrobials. The same goes for caretakers of livestock and companion animals seeking advice of an animal health professional before using antimicrobials as well as never borrowing antibiotics from other animal owners.

### **Education is empowering, but is it enough to change behaviour?**

There are numerous actions we can all take to tackle antimicrobial resistance if we are informed to make the right decisions, not only for ourselves and families but also for the community these dangerous superbugs can spread to. One of the barriers to achieving education in Africa is effective health communication because antimicrobial resistance can be a difficult concept to describe where some African languages don't have the technical terms to explain it, or otherwise where health literacy barriers mean that plain language is necessary. Beyond education, there are also certain choices that we can make as an individual because we want to be part of the solution. Let us do whatever we can to keep these precious antimicrobial medicines working, because without them we risk going back to an era where a simple infected cut can become fatal.

Join [World Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2020 Campaign for Africa events](#) from 18 – 24 November 2020.

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### **FURTHER READING:**

1. [Africa CDC Framework for Antimicrobial Resistance in Africa 2018- 2023](#)
2. [WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance](#)
3. [FAO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance](#)
4. [UNEP report - Antimicrobial Resistance: Investigating the Environmental Dimension](#)
5. [The OIE Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance and Prudent Use of Antimicrobials](#)



## Community Chat Etiquette

1. Chats are public. Even if you use a platform like [tchat.io](https://tchat.io), they still show on your timeline. Think before you tweet! Read more about maintaining a good digital footprint [here](#).
2. Please respect other members of the community and show courtesy at all times. Refer to the [Twitter Terms and Conditions of use](#). Disrespectful behaviour can be reported.
3. Don't be afraid to lurk, although participation is always encouraged, even if the topic is not within your expertise, your voice matters.
4. Visit [www.simplur.com](https://www.simplur.com) to check out the analytics and transcript which is open to the public.
5. If you don't understand a question from the moderator, don't be afraid to speak up and ask for clarity.
6. Use this opportunity to network with other stakeholders and follow them on Twitter.
7. When entering the Twitter chat, first introduce yourself and tell other members what you do so they get to know you.
8. If you agree with a member's perspective in a chat, go ahead and retweet them to show you support their idea.
9. The chat runs for 60 minutes, but you can join in at any time.
10. Start answers with the relevant T's and number for transcript purposes.
11. Answer each question after the moderator prompts but keep answers coming even if we move onto the next one. We don't want to miss out on your views!
12. Both panel experts and public attendees are invited to participate.
13. **Use the hashtag #AfricaWAAW** in all tweets or you won't be visible in the chat.
14. More information about how to participate in a Twitter chat can be [read here](#)