

Section 11 Therapeutics

Chapter 83

The Chennai Declaration: A Call to Action!

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INTRODUCTION

Antimicrobial resistance is a global problem with serious regional impacts. The foundation of modern medicine is based on the availability of antibiotics. In the absence of antibiotics, we may return to the pre-Alexander Fleming era, without intensive care units (ICUs), not able to provide cancer chemotherapy and transplant surgeries. Antibiotics are wonder molecules creating miracles!

Friends, in the immediate future, we may have to live without these wonder molecules, at least for a period. We are running out of antibiotics especially those active against Gram-negative bugs. Bacteria sensitive only to colistin, a rare entity until a few years ago, is becoming a day-to-day menace. Even colistin resistant and pan drug resistant bacteria are being reported in India and abroad. Medical societies in India have to help our authorities in the fight against this serious challenge.¹

“A Roadmap to Tackle the Challenge of Antimicrobial Resistance—A Joint Meeting of Medical Societies in India” was organized as a preconference symposium of the 2nd Annual Conference of the Clinical Infectious Disease Society (CIDSCON 2012) at Chennai on 24th August. This was the first ever meeting of medical societies in India on issue of tackling resistance, with a plan to formulate a roadmap to tackle the global challenge of antimicrobial resistance from the Indian perspective. We had representatives from most medical societies in India, eminent policy makers from both central and state Governments, representatives of World Health Organization (WHO), National Accreditation Board of Hospitals (NABH), Medical Council of India (MCI), Drug Controller General of India and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) along with well-known dignitaries in the Indian medical field. The meeting was attended by a large gathering of health care professionals. The meeting consisted of plenary and interactive discussion sessions designed to seek experience and views from a large range of health care professionals and included six international experts who shared action plans in their respective regions. The intention was to gain a broad consensus and range of opinions to guide formation of the roadmap. The ethos of the meeting was very much not to look back but rather to look forward and make joint efforts to tackle the menace of antibiotic resistance.²

AIM OF THE “ROADMAP MEETING” AND “CHENNAI DECLARATION”²

Aim of the “Roadmap meeting” and “Chennai Declaration” was to initiate efforts to formulate a national policy to control the rising

trend of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), after consultation with all relevant stakeholders and take all possible measures to implement the strategy.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF “THE CHENNAI DECLARATION”²

- Increasing antimicrobial resistance is a serious global and regional challenge. There is an urgent need to initiate measures to tackle the scenario and join international efforts to control this menace.
- The Indian Ministry of Health (MOH) will need to take urgent initiatives to formulate a national policy to control the rising trend of antimicrobial resistance, after consultation with all relevant stakeholders and then take all possible measures to implement the policy.
- The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) will need to formulate and implement a policy on rationalizing antibiotic usage in the country, both in hospitals and over the counters, after consultation with stakeholders and experts in the field.
- State Departments of Health will need to take initiatives to improve infection control standards and facilities in hospitals and encourage implementation of regional antibiotic policies, pending formulation and publication of a national policy. Once a national policy is formulated, whole hearted support for this policy by the state DOH is needed for implementation.
- The MCI will need to make necessary curriculum changes so as to include a structured training on antibiotic usage and infection control at the undergraduate and post-graduate level.
- An infection control team (ICT) must be made mandatory in all hospitals. Regulatory authorities and accreditation agencies (NABH, ISO) must insist on a functioning ICT, during the licensing and accreditation process.
- State Department of Health (DOH) should take initiatives in organizing regional and state infection control committees to supervise the functioning of Hospital ICT.
- A national task force should be setup to guide and supervise the Regional and State infection control committees.
- The National Accreditation Board of Hospitals is required to insist on strict implementation of hospital antibiotic and infection control policy, during hospital accreditation and reaccreditation processes. Hospitals without compliance with the policy should not be given accreditation.
- The ICMR should broaden the antimicrobial resistance surveillance network, incorporating hospitals from both the government

and private sector. ICMR will need to provide funds for research on antimicrobial resistance, drug development and vaccines.

- The Indian division of the WHO should step up interaction with the government on issues related to drug resistance, antibiotic policy and infection control.
- There is an urgent need to standardize microbiology laboratories in India. Hospitals must have good quality microbiology laboratory or should be willing to outsource specimens, in the absence of a standardized laboratory.
- Medical societies to take active interest in initiating infection control and antibiotic stewardship awareness activities among the society members, utilizing the extensive network of local branches of all societies.
- Medical journals should make deliberate attempts to educate readers on infection control and national antibiotic policy-related issues.
- Electronic and print mass media should take initiatives on public awareness campaigns on the dangers of misuse of antibiotics.
- Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—national and international have played a pivotal role in disseminating public information and funding research in diseases like cancer and cardiac

diseases. They should come forward with similar enthusiasm to tackle antibiotic resistance issue, with the same vigor.

- There is a need to evaluate the extent and to regulate the usage of antibiotics in veterinary practice.

WHERE DOES THE ROADMAP HEAD?²

“The Chennai Declaration” has already been submitted to all sectors of the relevant governmental and nongovernmental bodies, medical societies and all major stakeholders. The coordinators of the declaration are in constant touch with all the stakeholders to take the recommendations forward.

If we have the will and resolve, the “Chennai Declaration” targets can very easily be achieved.²

REFERENCES

1. Cesar A Arias. Antibiotic-resistant bugs in the 21st century—A clinical super-challenge. *NEJM*. 2009;360:439-43.
2. Ghafur A, Mathai D, Muruganathan A, et al. “The Chennai Declaration” recommendations of “A roadmap to tackle the challenge of antimicrobial resistance”—A joint meeting of medical societies of India. *Indian J Cancer*. 2012;49(4) DOI:10.4103/0019-509X.104065.