

This World Sight Day, we spotlight a growing and urgent threat to global eye health: antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Often overlooked in discussions of vision loss, AMR is a rising contributor to severe eye infections and preventable blindness — particularly across the Asia-Pacific region.

AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites develop resistance to drugs that once effectively treated them. In the context of eye health, resistant infections of the cornea — the clear, outer layer of the eye — can be especially devastating. These infections are not only harder to treat, but they also increase the risk of permanent vision loss and require costly interventions, placing a heavy burden on individuals and health systems alike.

Ocular infections linked to AMR are driven by a range of factors, including eye trauma from agricultural work, poor sanitation, and unsafe contact lens use. Once infected, patients face limited treatment options if the microbes are resistant to commonly used drugs.

The problem is not confined to healthcare settings. AMR is fueled by the overuse and misuse of antimicrobials in human medicine, livestock farming, agriculture, and through environmental contamination. Microbes exposed repeatedly to these drugs learn to survive them — reducing the effectiveness of treatment over time.

Data from across Asia-Pacific countries show alarming trends. For example, hospital records in India reveal that some bacterial strains are already resistant to more than eight commonly used antibiotics. Globally, AMR is already among the top three causes of death and disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that AMR is “one of the biggest threats to global health.”

What Can Be Done?

Everyone has a role to play in combating AMR.

- **Use antibiotics responsibly** — only when prescribed and necessary.
- **Practice good hygiene and sanitation** to reduce infections and the need for antibiotics.
- **Support better surveillance** — robust data collection is key to tracking and tackling the spread of resistant microbes.

AMR is not a future threat. Like climate change, it is already impacting millions of lives. But with coordinated global action, we can reduce its burden and protect sight for generations to come.

Key Facts

- **WHO** reports that bacterial AMR caused 1.27 million deaths in 2019 and contributed to nearly 5 million.
- Overuse and improper disposal of antimicrobials in healthcare, agriculture, and livestock are major contributors to AMR.
- **The World Bank** estimates AMR could cost global households up to **USD 1.2 trillion** in extra healthcare expenses by 2050.
- **Vision loss** is a direct consequence of AMR when infections resist standard treatment.



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- **Collective action** — including public awareness, responsible drug use, and effective waste management — is essential to addressing AMR.

About World Sight Day

World Sight Day is observed annually on the second Thursday of October to emphasize the importance of accessible and affordable eye care for all. It calls for regular eye health check-ups and early intervention, recognizing the critical role vision plays in education, employment, and overall quality of life.

🔗 Learn more: https://www.iapb.world/world_sight_day

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