

World Sight Day Spotlight on Antimicrobial Resistance

Antimicrobial resistance is one of ‘the biggest threats to global health’ including vision.

9 October 2025, [Location]: This World Sight Day is an opportunity to underscore the role of antimicrobial resistance in maintaining healthy eyes. Growing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is becoming one of the main causes of death, and a significant driver of vision loss in the world. AMR drives severe microbial infections of the eye, which are a major cause of blindness, especially in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. A variety of causes, from ocular trauma while farming to contact lens wear, drive ocular infections across the region. When those infections are caused by microbes that are resistant to extant antimicrobials, it results in AMR-related vision loss. Managing AMR is a multi-stakeholder problem as microbial exposure to these drugs can occur in many different contexts. These range from hospital-based infections to water contamination and antibiotic use in livestock management.

Vision loss resulting from AMR-fueled infections that damage the cornea, the clear outer layer of the eye, are hard to treat and vision restoration may prove expensive to the patients, especially those who are vulnerable to financial instability. AMR is the phenomenon where bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites turn resistant to the drugs that kill them. Drugs that were previously effective are now slowly losing their potency as these microbes develop resistance to them. Over-use and excessive, unwarranted exposure to these drugs across human societies breeds microbes that have learnt to survive them.

Different countries in Asia-Pacific have reported different levels of AMR in their hospital data. Reports from India, for example, note that samples of common, infectious bacteria have strains that are resistant already to over 8 kinds of antibiotics. Already, global burden of diseases data shows that AMR is directly and indirectly one of the top 3 causes of death and morbidity in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) notes that AMR is ‘one of the biggest threats to global health.’

What can the public do? Together with doctors, everyone can promote responsible use of antibiotics and related drugs. Washing hands and other forms of sanitation and hygiene can reduce the risk of infections. A key issue with understanding AMR spread is the lack of reliable data. Public and municipal systems need to collect surveillance data on the spread of key microbes in their environment.

Antimicrobial resistance is not a problem of the future. Like climate change, it is here and impacting millions of lives today. However, we can work together to find solutions.

Key facts

- WHO notes that ‘Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the top global public health and development threats. It is estimated that bacterial AMR was directly responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019 and contributed to 4.95 million deaths.’
- Overuse and misuse of these vital drugs in livestock farming, agriculture, and their unsafe disposal has led to growing resistance in microbes.
- AMR is not just a health problem. The World Bank estimates that AMR may lead to nearly USD 1.2 trillion in extra health expenditure for global households by 2050.
- Vision loss is one of the consequences of AMR, especially due to infections that do not respond to treatment.
- We must work together to combat AMR. This includes responsible usage and disposal of these valuable drugs.

About World Sight Day

World Sight Day is an international observance, marked on the second Thursday of October every year, on the importance of eye care. The day draws the world’s attention on what it means to have eye care that is accessible, available and affordable to all. It notes that early intervention and regular eye health checkups are critical to unlocking education opportunities and future economic potential.

Find out more: https://www.iapb.world/world_sight_day