

Drug-resistant diseases on the rise: study

June 15 2010

Efforts by rich countries to provide drugs to help fight diseases in poor countries has accelerated disease resistance to antibiotics, a report out Tuesday said.

The result is that more people are dying from diseases that used to be curable because they are being treated with older-generation drugs, said the Center for Global Development (CGD), a non-governmental organization based in Washington.

Over the past years developed countries and private aid groups have given [poor countries](#) increased access to drugs to treat diseases such as malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis, according to the report.

The result: strains of those diseases are increasingly resistant to [antibiotics](#), and the world is losing its ability to treat these and more common diseases such as dysentery and respiratory infections.

In recent years poor countries have had a 10-fold increase in access to anti-retroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS patients, a more than eight-fold increase in deliveries of anti-malaria drugs, and a large increase in access to anti-tuberculosis drugs, the report said.

These "laudable" efforts have saved many lives, "but they are hindered by drug resistance that could be avoided," said a statement announcing the report.

"Until now, surprisingly little effort has gone into ensuring that life-

saving drugs will continue to work."

Millions of children die in developing countries each year from drug resistant diseases -- and since 2006 donors have spent more than 1.5 billion dollars on advanced drugs to treat resistant diseases, the report said.

"Unless action is taken, the stage is set for both the death toll and the dollar cost to rise," a statement said. "Donors are already budgeting for increased purchases of expensive specialized drugs needed to treat resistant diseases."

The report called on the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) "to reverse a decade of neglect of drug resistance and to take the lead in getting others involved.

"Action is needed from a wide variety of stakeholders -- pharmaceutical companies, national governments, philanthropies that buy and distribute medicines, hospitals, healthcare providers, pharmacies, and even patients."

Drug resistance "is a natural occurrence, but careless practices in drug supply and use are hastening it unnecessarily", said Rachel Nugent, chair of the expert Working Group that prepared the report, "The Race Against [Drug Resistance](#)."

Developed countries have similar problems: "superbugs" like methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) "increased from roughly two percent to more than 50 percent of staph infections in many US hospitals between 1974 and 2004. More people in the United States die each year from MRSA than HIV/AIDS," the statement said.

More than three million children each year die of bacterial acute

respiratory infections, for example, while malaria kills two million.

"Many of these cases involve strains resistant to common drugs," the statement said.

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Citation: Drug-resistant diseases on the rise: study (2010, June 15) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-06-drug-resistant-diseases.html>

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