

Can the International Health Regulations apply to antimicrobial resistance?

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In this week's *PLoS Medicine*, Stephan Harbarth from the University of Geneva, Switzerland and colleagues argue that the International Health Regulations (IHR) should be applied to the global health threat of antimicrobial resistance. They say that certain events marking the emergence and spread of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria, especially those involving new pan-resistant strains for which there are no suitable treatments, may constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and are notifiable to WHO under the IHR notification requirement.

In an accompanying Perspective article, Adam Kamradt-Scott from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom (uninvolved in the work) disagrees with the Harbarth proposal and argues that the IHR were never intended to tackle all disease threats and that applying it to [antimicrobial resistance](#) would be impossible to implement.

The International Health Regulations (IHR) is a legally binding agreement between 194 States Parties, whose aim is to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease. These global rules are intended to enhance national, regional and global public health security.

More information: Wernli D, Hausteiner T, Conly J, Carmeli Y, Kickbusch I, et al. (2011) A Call for Action: The Application of the International Health Regulations to the Global Threat of Antimicrobial

Resistance. PLoS Med 8(4): e1001022.

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