

Antibiotics: Do you think they're a cure for the common cold?

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An Ipsos MORI poll commissioned by the Royal Society of Chemistry has shown that 74% of the public believe that a major research and development effort is needed to create new antibiotics for fighting infectious disease.

In the face of an antibiotic apocalypse caused by rising [antimicrobial resistance](#), 63% of the public believe that research and development efforts should be carried out with support from a combination of public and private finances.

The Royal Society of Chemistry is calling on the Government to establish public-private programmes in antimicrobial R&D to facilitate this and to enable us to fight future infectious disease epidemics.

The poll, commissioned to mark the opening events of Chemistry Week 2013 and European Antibiotics Awareness Day, also highlights an alarming lack of awareness among members of the public that there has been no development of the classes of [antibiotics](#) needed to fight so-called "superbugs" in the last three decades.

2033 participants were interviewed across GB - half (1013) were asked whether they agreed with the statement: 'There have been no new classes of antibiotics developed for approximately 30 years'. Only one in four people agreed (25%) when phrased in this way.

The other half (1020) were posed the statement: 'There have been many

new classes of antibiotics developed in the last 30 years' - 50% of participants agreed.

The stark truth is that there have been no new major classes of antibiotics discovered since 1987. The UK's Chief Medical Officer, Professor Dame Sally Davies said resistance to antibiotics was "a ticking time bomb" earlier this year and we know resistant bugs kill 25,000 people a year across Europe - almost the same number of people who die in road traffic accidents.

There are 35 million courses of antibiotics prescribed by GPs alone in England each year, over six million doses of antimicrobials are given in UK hospitals every day and 7% of all deaths in the UK are caused by [infectious diseases](#).

One of the most surprising results of the Royal Society of Chemistry's poll showed a startling lack of understanding of what antibiotics are effective against, particularly amongst younger people. A quarter of 15-24 year-olds think they are used to treat colds and flu and almost half of people aged 15-24 and 25-34 (47% and 50% respectively) think antibiotics work to treat viral infections like shingles or ear infections.

As antimicrobial resistance has increased in recent years, it is those young people who stand the greatest chance of being affected when our current crop of antibiotics is no longer effective.

The poll results clearly show a need for education on the importance and use of antibiotics. If people use antibiotics to attempt to treat minor viruses like colds, antimicrobial resistance will inevitably increase.

A range of scientific disciplines, including [chemistry](#), will be vital for discovering new antibiotics to fight bacteria as well as helping researchers to understand why resistance develops and making sure we

have better diagnostics for testing. Only by developing new drugs and diagnostics will we be able to overcome antimicrobial resistance in the future.

Provided by Royal Society of Chemistry

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