

UK experts urge \$2bn global fund to develop antibiotics

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The global pharmaceutical industry should set up a \$2.0 billion (1.8-billion euro) global innovation fund to help kickstart research into developing more resistant antibiotics, experts said on Thursday.

The report was by the British government appointed Review on Antimicrobial Resistance committee, which has warned that drug-resistant microbes could kill 10 million people a year worldwide by 2050.

"We need to kickstart drug development to make sure the world has the drugs it needs," the review's author, economist Jim O'Neill, told the BBC.

O'Neill, who used to work at Goldman Sachs investment bank, has also warned that [antimicrobial resistance](#)—when bugs become immune to existing drugs— could cost \$100 trillion in lost economic output.

Speaking on the BBC Panorama programme, he said big pharma should act with "enlightened self-interest".

"If it gets really bad, somebody is going to come gunning for these guys just how people came gunning for finance" during the 2008 [global financial crisis](#), he said.

He said a fund with \$2.0 billion over five years would give a vital boost to research and development by universities and small biotech

companies.

The report said that one potential direction was the development of "resistance breakers" that could boost the effectiveness of existing [antibiotics](#) without the additional cost of developing new ones.

With \$2.0 billion over five years, the fund could prioritise payment to universities and small biotech companies and break the link between profitability of the drug and volume of sales.

"Too many good ideas are not being pursued for lack of funding," the report said.

O'Neill was appointed by Prime Minister David Cameron last year.

The World Health Organization last month warned that the world was doing far too little to combat the misuse of antibiotics, which is fuelling [drug resistance](#) and allowing treatable diseases to become killers.

In its first ever analysis of how countries are responding to the problem of antimicrobial resistance, the UN health agency revealed "major gaps" in all six regions of the world.

"This is the single greatest challenge in infectious diseases today," Keiji Fukuda, WHO's assistant director general for health security, said in a statement.

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