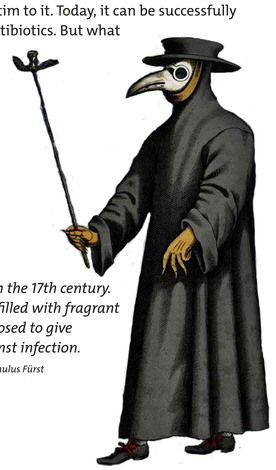
# Unstoppable? Antibiotic resistance worldwide

Photo: © Manuscript/Sylvain Liechti

## I HATE IT LIKE THE PLAGUE

The plague was a dreaded disease in past centuries. Millions fell victim to it. Today, it can be successfully treated with antibiotics. But what happens when antibiotics no longer work?



*Plague doctor in the 17th century. The beak mask filled with fragrant herbs was supposed to give protection against infection.*
*Photo: © Columbina/Paulus Fürst*

**"Antibiotic resistance is not a distant threat, but something that is happening here and now. All over the world antibiotics are failing to do their job."**

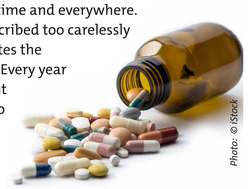
*Madlen Davies, journalist, UK*

**"We humans have created an unjust world, with an unequal distribution of wealth and power. This leads to unhealthy living conditions for millions. Dirt and unsanitary living conditions provide an environment where microorganisms thrive and resistance develops."**

*Gopal Dabade, physician, India*

### WHEN ANTIBIOTICS NO LONGER WORK!

Antibiotics no longer help every time and everywhere. For decades, they have been prescribed too carelessly and used incorrectly. This promotes the development of resistant germs. Every year 700,000 people die from resistant pathogens because antibiotics no longer work.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### POVERTY: BREEDING GROUND FOR RESISTANCE

Poor living conditions make people ill and favour the spread of super germs. Antibiotic resistance is therefore an even bigger threat in poor countries. Many sick people can't afford a doctor. So they buy the 'wonder weapon' – an antibiotic – directly from a street vendor. This often doesn't help, but it does promote the spread of resistant pathogens. On the other hand, some people are still dying because they aren't given antibiotics.

### LAST RESORT?

Treatment of resistant forms of diseases takes a long time, is expensive and has more side effects. The chances of recovery are also lower. Bacterial infections that used to be easy to treat can now be fatal. And because of the cost, many people don't even have a chance of receiving treatment.

### NO PROFIT – NO RESEARCH

There is hardly any profit to be made from researching new antibiotics. As a result, most major pharmaceutical companies have stopped funding research. When a newly developed drug does come onto the market, it's often not available in poor countries.

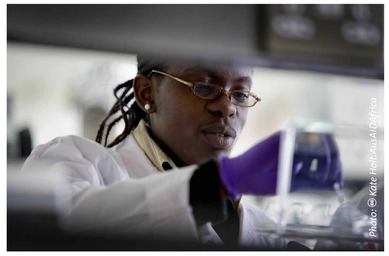
Photo: © Kate Holt/AuguAID Africa

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

Ask your doctor whether an antibiotic is really necessary.

Hygiene – like washing your hands – protects you and others.

Pay attention to hygiene at work.

Use the latest guidelines as an orientation for therapy.

Give your patients detailed advice.

Don't repeatedly prescribe the same active ingredient to the same patient within a short period of time.

Consult with colleagues on a regular basis.

Photo: © iStock

**"Antibiotic resistance is one of the greatest threats to humanity. It's in the same league as climate change."**

*Prof. Moritz van Vuuren," South Africa*

The massive use of antibiotics has dramatic effects on human, animal and environmental health. Together with partner organizations in India, Tanzania, South Africa and Germany, the BUKO Pharma-Campaign has investigated the situation. Examples from different countries show where the problems lie. Only the responsible use of antibiotics can slow down the development of resistance.

### RESISTANCE KNOWS NO BORDERS

*A pathogen that was first detected in Sweden in 2009 – brought in by a tourist from India – was found in 75 countries just one year later. Resistant pathogens have no regard for borders. They spread from person to person and via goods transports.*

Our brochures offer further information. Both are available here free of charge. Please ask us for one.

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