Medicines We Can Trust
Progress on AMR & UHC Isn’t Possible Without Quality Medicines

To tackle one of the most urgent public health crises facing the world today – antimicrobial resistance (AMR) – universal health coverage (UHC) must be realized. It’s time to take action by ensuring that everyone has access to safe, effective, quality-assured medicines.

The Global Impact of Poor-Quality Medicines

**Poor-quality medicines fall into two categories:**

- **Falsified:** Medicines that deliberately or fraudulently misrepresent their identity, composition or source.
- **Substandard:** Medicines that fail to meet quality specifications (e.g., those that contain too little of the active ingredients or that have degraded from improper storage and transport conditions).

According to the World Health Organization, at least one in 10 medicines in low- and middle-income countries is estimated to be substandard or falsified.¹

**More than** 12% **of antibiotics are substandard or falsified in low- and middle-income countries.**²

How Poor-Quality Medicines Fuel AMR

**Reduce treatment adherence**

When patients receive poor-quality medicines that don’t work, they’re less likely to trust future treatments.

**Promote resistant strains**

By providing too little of needed active ingredients, poor-quality medicines allow microbes to become immune to common treatments. This can lead to the spread of more harmful strains that are tougher to treat.

**Encourage use of last-resort drugs**

When standard treatments fail, doctors may prescribe last-resort drugs. This can breed resistance to medicine’s last lines of defense.

Incorporating Medicines Quality into National Action Plans on AMR

Many countries have demonstrated their commitment to combating AMR through the development of national action plans on AMR that acknowledge the importance of improving access to and use of antimicrobials. It’s essential that these plans also include quality assurance strategies.

- **Strengthen regulatory systems** to ensure that manufacturing and supply chains comply with best practices.
- **Ensure procured medicines meet international standards,** such as WHO prequalification.
- **Support quality control laboratories** to attain international standards.
- **Bolster existing knowledge and evidence base** on the relationships between poor-quality medicines and AMR.
- **Develop mechanisms for** reporting and acting on poor-quality antimicrobials with relevant stakeholders.

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Building Quality into the UHC Agenda

The vision of UHC is that everyone should have access to the health services they need and deserve, without facing financial hardship. Achieving UHC requires:

- Equity and access for everyone who needs services and medicines
- Quality, well-trained health workers
- Affordable health systems
- Availability of quality-assured medical products

UHC is one of the best ways the world can tackle the biggest public health challenges, including AMR. But without well-financed health systems, countries are more likely to cut corners when procuring medicines, at the risk of sacrificing quality.

Medicines That Don’t Work:

**Undermine Trust in Health Care System**

“I bought this medicine to cure me, but it brought me closer to death. If the case is not very complicated, I will never go to a pharmacy again.”
- Patient in DRC

**Spread Disease**

Inadequately treating infectious diseases increases natural resistance to common medicines, burdening the health system and resulting in preventable deaths.

**Waste Money**

Every year, governments waste an estimated $30.5 billion delivering medicines that don’t work.iii

How Do We Ensure Medicines Quality?

The good news is that we have proven solutions to protect medicine quality. To ensure everyone has access to safe, quality medicines, four decisive actions are needed at local, regional and global levels:

- **Donors**
  Need to prioritize investments in UHC and in regulatory systems and ensure quality assurance is incorporated into medical product manufacturing, procurement and distribution practices.

- **Countries**
  Must establish strong regulatory systems that prevent poor-quality medicines from moving through the supply chain and remove them when they do.

- **Health Workers**
  Must be stewards of quality who actively engage with relevant regulatory authorities when treatment failure related to poor-quality medicines is suspected.

- **Patients & Consumers**
  Should know what to look for, report suspicious products and demand quality medicines.

Join The Movement

The Medicines We Can Trust campaign is a global movement to raise awareness about the importance of quality medicines and inspire collective action. Since its launch in 2018, more than 300 civil society organizations, philanthropic foundations, government entities and private partners from across 15 countries have joined the campaign. For more information or to join, visit MedsWeCanTrust.org.

Sources

