



## News Release

Charity uses birthday to say: “Let’s have no unhappy returns to a pre-penicillin age”

*0001hrs, Friday September 28<sup>th</sup> 2018 – the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of penicillin*

“Stop tarnishing the legacy of Britain’s greatest health discovery and instead fund new treatments to prevent deadly superbugs.”

That’s the message being delivered on the 90th birthday of penicillin (*Friday September 28<sup>th</sup> 2018*) by charity Antibiotic Research UK (**ANTRUK**), who state that a failure to build-on that pivotal moment in history has resulted in a potential health catastrophe that will claim more lives than cancer.

And they are being backed in their quest by Sarah Whitlow, the granddaughter of the genius who discovered penicillin – Sir Alexander Fleming.

“Fleming’s discovery of bacterial-killing mould in a petri dish that he’d forgotten to dispose of, has become the stuff of legend” said Professor Colin Garner, Founder and Chief Executive of ANTRUK, “and rightly so. Antibiotics were the miracle medication of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, saving millions of lives and lengthening life-expectancy. But as early as 1945, Fleming warned that one day bacteria in our bodies would become resistant to antibiotics, unless we continued to develop new treatments. Now, 90 years on, we are facing the nightmare scenario of a pre-antibiotic age, where routine hospital operations will be cancelled for fear of infection, and you can die from something as simple as a scratch.”

Overuse and misuse of antibiotics (they do not cure colds and flu), poor environmental and agricultural stewardship (meaning that antibiotic residue is polluting our food and water), and a lack of new treatments are increasingly resulting in conditions such as TB, gonorrhoea and cystitis becoming dangerous again. Large pharmaceutical companies claim that because antibiotics are only used for a short time, there is no money to be made in developing new ones.

Professor Garner added: “We have reached the point of lunacy. A breakthrough funded by the drugs companies could be used on a cancer patient who goes into hospital but then dies of an infection because there are no antibiotics to treat it. We must find a way to cajole and incentivise the pharmaceutical industry to develop new treatments immediately.”

ANTRUK supporters are doing their bit to raise cash, and funds have helped investigate alternatives to current antibiotic treatments. The charity is organising Great British Tea Party fundraising events across the country to tie-in with World Antibiotic Awareness Week (12-18<sup>th</sup> November). And since this is the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of penicillin, it is asking people to run on-line campaigns to gather funds on their own birthday for ANTRUK (you can order your free Great British Tea Party pack by visiting <https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/great-british-tea-party/>)

Born a Fleming, Suffolk based practice nurse Sarah Whitlow has seen for herself the positive impact of her grandfather's discovery. She said: "Health would've been a disaster without it.

Unfortunately, people think antibiotics are a silver bullet for every illness. There are countries where you can buy them over the counter, people don't use them wisely and don't finish the course, and they are sometimes misused in farming, too. Since granddad's day, people have become more frightened of illness and won't wait to get better. He suspected and worried that this might happen."

Concluded Professor Garner: "All of us have a role to play in combating antibiotic resistant infections, whether we are government, medical research charities, GPs and other prescribers, or the public. Let us remember with great pride the discovery of penicillin, but at the same time heed Fleming's warning and do all that we can to extinguish the nightmare of antibiotic bacterial resistance for our children and our grandchildren."

To donate to ANTRUK's work funding new research into treatments to replace our current antibiotics, visit <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/2680#/DonationDetails>

The charity also supports people living with antibiotic resistant infections such as MRSA.

- Ends -

**Pictured is Sarah Whitlow, with a photograph of her grandfather, Sir Alexander Fleming.**

#### **For further information**

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