



News Release

Lecture sends out message on dearth of funds for antibiotic resistance research

Includes details of ANTRUK's Annual Lecture, Thursday 18 October 2018

A national charity will use the 90th anniversary of the discovery of penicillin to call for a massive injection of funds into antibiotic research - or risk returning humanity to an age where people died from something as simple as a scratch.

In the presence of Sir Alexander Fleming's granddaughter nurse Sarah Whitlow, attendees at Antibiotic Research UK (ANTRUK)'s Annual Lecture in the Palace of Westminster, will hear how a woeful lack of resource devoted to new bacterial infection treatments to replace our ageing antibiotics has left world health in jeopardy and shamed our nation's greatest health discovery.

"When Fleming received his Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1945, he warned that if we didn't build-on the discovery of penicillin with ever-more treatments, bacteria in our bodies would become resistant to the drugs and humanity put in mortal peril" said Professor Colin Garner, Founder and Chief Executive of ANTRUK. "Politicians response to this has been silence or lip-service and pharmaceutical companies simply won't invest in research because antibiotics don't make them enough money. When will they realise we are in grave danger of a health crisis worse than cancer and that medicine could return to the dark ages?"

ANTRUK, the small but growing charity tackling the world's biggest health problem, has responded to the impending crisis by funding research to find new treatments, awarding small academic research grants and beginning a patient support programme (Portcullis House, Westminster, Thursday October 18, 1 30pm). The charity is also about to launch their annual major fundraising campaign The Great

British Tea Party to coincide with World Antibiotic Awareness Week in November. The aim is to gather communities together around the country and raise funds for research and education around superbugs (see <https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/great-british-tea-party/>)

But Professor Garner admits this is just a drop in the ocean compared to what is required to prevent us from sliding into a pre-antibiotic age. “In many ways antibiotic resistance is a problem akin to climate change which has taken a massive effort by scientists to convince the public and politicians to act” he said, “for years, people have been aware of resistance it, but have seen it as remote to their everyday lives. Already 700,000 people per year are dying globally of bacterial antibiotic resistant infections, illnesses such as cystitis and TB are becoming untreatable, and antibiotic residues are polluting our rivers and food supply. Government, drugs companies, health charities, the NHS and the public must do something about it NOW. Inactivity is no longer an option.”

Introduced by Kevin Hollinrake MP for Thirsk and Malton, the ANTRUK Annual Lecture event will feature a presentation by a superbug sufferer and a presentation to Fleming’s granddaughter, practising nurse Sarah Whitlow. The main talk itself will come from Professor Paul Little, Professor of Primary Care Research within Medicine at the University of Southampton. Paul was awarded a CBE in the Queens 2018 Birthday Honours for services to General Practice Research. Professor Little’s research is focused on reducing antibiotic prescribing and finding non-antibiotic alternatives for the treatment of infection. The title of his talk is “From Nepal to Flesh Eating Killer bugs: a research journey of antibiotic use in primary care”.

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For further information

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