It is hard to believe that my previous Newsletter introduction was just three months ago. Since then I have barely ventured out of my house and garden.

As I write this, government relaxation of COVID-19 lockdown instructions is being implemented. Whether such relaxations should be occurring at this time is a hotly debated topic amongst scientist and clinical specialists in infectious disease. Only time will tell if we are going too fast too soon. What the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated like never before is the importance of infectious disease science as a discipline and how the UK has some of the world’s leaders in this area. My personal hope is that after the current pandemic has burnt itself out, that as recommended by Lord Jim O’Neill’s AMR review team the area of infectious disease receives far more attention and resource than in the past. COVID-19 has highlighted just how quickly a pandemic can spread through the population.

Antibiotic Research UK’s main focus is on bacterial infections and resistance of these to antibiotics. Sadly, such infections are often intertwined with viral infections. Lowering of immunity to the latter opens the door to infection by the former. Limited data from hospitalised COVID-19 patients in China suggests that 50% of patients with COVID-19 who died had secondary bacterial infections. Most patients received antibiotics which appeared not to improve outcomes.

There is a massive lack of data on whether secondary bacterial infections are a cause of death in COVID-19 patients. Pneumonia is often written on the death certificate as the cause of death, but we need much more information than this. Our charity has campaigned for many years for more detail to be written on death certificates if death was caused by infection. Most times we don’t have this information because we don’t have a suitable diagnostic test. I am struck by how quickly diagnostic tests have been developed for COVID-19 compared to tests for bacterial infections.

It is against this background that we have been engaging with patients with bacterial infections to ask them to tell their stories. At the same time we have been reaching out to the public to provide them with assured advice and information using our in-house experts through our ‘Ask ANTRUK’ initiative (https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/coronavirus/ask-antibiotic-research-uk/). Please ask your friends, families and colleagues to take advantage of this new feature. Its success depends on your involvement.

These are extremely difficult times for charities. Our charity through its expertise in infectious diseases seeks to become the go to charity for advice and information at this time particularly as most of our scientific research programmes have had to be suspended because of laboratory closures. It is very important that when life gets back to the ‘new normal’ that we are here to support scientists as they reopen their labs as well as expand our Patient Support Services.

We can only do this with your help - I am asking you to donate in any way you can to help ensure our next pandemic is not one caused by a drug-resistant bacterial infection.

Professor Colin Garner
Founder and Chief Executive of Antibiotic Research UK (ANTRUK)
It has been said that “variety is the spice of life” – and that would be very true of the different elements of work undertaken by those working on our patient support team. The last few months have seen enquiries by patients and the general public increasing steadily by calls, texts and emails. While the biggest proportion of enquiries are about resistant chronic UTI, others seek trustworthy information on preventing infection from serious surgeries or requiring support when suffering secondary infections acquired during COVID-19.

Many of those helped by Patient Support (including Rhonda, pictured here) have readily agreed to talk about their experience of resistant bacterial infection, and how profoundly that has affected, even radically changed their lives. They are saying loudly and clearly that progress has to be much faster and smarter in developing new antibiotics while protecting existing antibiotics to keep them working. The COVID-19 pandemic is showing clearly that antibiotic resistance could be the “next global pandemic” – unless we all act together now!

Antibiotic Research UK is the only charity who has access to that powerful patient voice to help express how resistant infection changes lives - sometimes forever. Arlene is being asked to share these patient experiences more and more – to government, policymakers, researchers, clinicians and pharmaceutical industry. This has been done in a variety of ways – on podcasts, in interviews and through live presentations.

We are so proud of the courage and resilience of every single one of our patients who have bravely shared their experience with Antibiotic Research UK, so we in turn, can help others understand the critical urgency of addressing antibiotic resistance. This truly helps provide that wake-up call that this is not a problem of tomorrow but is already with us, and the patient stories fully demonstrate that.

Read more at: https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/coronavirus/

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**Patient support update**

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**Take a look at Facebook**

Do you know someone suffering with an ongoing, recurring or resistant bacterial infection who would value speaking to others in a similar position? Our Patient Support team has launched a private closed group on Facebook for those who’d like to communicate and share with others in a safe community space. Jodie (supported by Arlene) will help introduce individuals to one another in the group, to mutually support one another through exchanging information, knowledge and experiences of dealing with bacterial infection.

New members can apply to join the closed community group HERE

You can also contact Arlene in Patient Support on

Telephone: 07367 784114

Email: patient.support@antibioticresearch.org.uk
Life has changed drastically for all charities during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The team have worked hard on coming up with alternative fundraising ideas and we have been supported by people taking on challenges at home. Hannah ran a half marathon in her local area, Claire and her family did a day of sporting challenges and our very own Alison walked an entire marathon up and down her street!

Your support for Antibiotic Research UK is more important than ever before to help support people struggling with bacterial infections during COVID-19, to provide trusted information and to save modern medicine from the threat of antibiotic resistance. We appreciate anything you can do for us. Here are three ways you can support us today:

Donate – you can donate safely and securely on our website either as a one off or by setting up a direct debit here.

Fundraise – we have a page of fundraising ideas that can be safely carried out during lockdown.

Support our Radio 4 Appeal – we are thrilled to have been selected as a charity for a Radio 4 Appeal. More details will be released when we have a date for the appeal. It would be great if you could think about who you could share this with once it is launched to help us make the most of this great opportunity.

Dr Alison Staples, Head of Fundraising says:

“We had a summer of sporting events planned with the London Landmarks Half Marathon and Ride London plus the Great Manchester Run. We’ve also had community fundraising activities cancelled – including a wonderful fundraising gala evening. Not only are our supporters who were due to take part in these events really disappointed that they have been cancelled, but Antibiotic Research UK has found itself without vital income over the summer.”

Our expertise, insight, views and even the lives of our patients such as Lisa (pictured), have been hogging the headlines over the last couple of months.

Of particular interest to the press was the parallel we drew between COVID-19 cases and secondary bacterial infections leading to sepsis. Coverage has been achieved everywhere from The Times to The Mail, with appearances on regional TV and radio.

Lisa's worries about contracting the virus, when she is already battling antibiotic resistance, featured in the Manchester Evening News, whilst an opinion piece from our chief executive Professor Colin Garner stirred up interest and activity following its publication in The Yorkshire Post.

Daily blogs and our redesigned website (complete with Coronavirus page) have further helped increase awareness of our charity, as have our very active social media accounts. The Pharmaceutical Journal's feature on our Patient Support scheme was one of a clutch of articles appearing in the professional press.

Media and Comms Consultant Peter Gibson commented:

“At the outset of the virus we put together a media strategy outlining our aims at what we knew would be a busy time, cluttered with requests. Our focus has been around providing a trustworthy voice that highlights the very real link between COVID-19 and drug-resistance.”

Help fund crucial research. Click to donate online.
Awareness course opens for all

Our Patient Support team has helped Manchester University develop the world’s first online course for everyone, on antibiotic resistance.

Created by students, academics and patients, the accredited programme is a fun and easy way to learn about this vital issue, via quizzes and bite-size facts. It also includes a selection of case studies from the Patient Stories section of our website.

Manchester University has a long-standing partnership with Antibiotic Research UK, which has seen the formation of a voluntary awareness group, fundraising activities for the Great British Tea Party and joint campaigning around sexually transmitted infections.

That collaboration has been brokered by Senior Lecturer at the University and valued Member of our Education Committee, Dr Roger Harrison.

Want to attempt the course? You can find it here.

Dr Harrison said of the new course:

“The curriculum was informed by guidance from the Wellcome Trust on the most effective language with which to reach people and the evaluation will help to increase understanding about the use of online approaches to engage the public on this topic. From the course design perspective, a distinctive feature is that it trialled the use of a new ‘agile methodology’ for curriculum design and worked in direct partnership with a team of student volunteers from different disciplines across The University. The content, and design was also developed in collaboration with a local patient representative, herself having severe antibiotic resistant infections.”

A score of 80% or more receives a certificate from the University.

We put our expertise on (the) line

Mid-May saw another first for our charity and indeed the world, with the unveiling of the “Ask ANTRUK” question and answer function on our website.

Members of the public were encouraged to pose questions to the medical, pharmaceutical and research experts on our patient support team through our new page – see https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/coronavirus/ask-antibiotic-research-uk/.

Responses have been promised as promptly as possible and will be stored on our site in case similar queries are raised in the future.

Ask ANTRUK is all part of a marketing campaign to raise the profile of our pioneering Patient Support scheme at this time where confusion around COVID-19 and secondary bacterial infections is rife.

Arlene Brailey from Patient Support said:

“Just like the personalised support people get when they contact us via phone or email, Ask ANTRUK gives concerned members of the public robust, research-backed advice and support. I can think of no other scheme like it.”
How to get decision-makers to discourage the abuse of antibiotics in dentistry during the Coronavirus was one of the topics tackled at our latest Education Committee meeting.

Practices have been closed during the pandemic with hubs providing emergency treatment, whilst dentists have been left to disseminate antibiotics without prior personal examination of the patient.

Subjects to get your teeth into

Education Committee Member and senior dentist Sarah Glover has since written a blog and an opinion slot for the Yorkshire Post on the issue.

Fundraising during Lockdown, a productive quarter for our Patient Support scheme, two new educational initiatives led by Manchester University and how our communications have changed to meet the threats and opportunities of COVID-19 were also debated in the first Zoom gathering of the committee.

Carolyn Childs who has taught in mainstream secondary and primary schools, in special schools and for time as a specialist pre-school teacher, was formally welcomed to the Committee.

So too was lay member Rebecca Harmston, whose professional background is in scientific research including periods in a tumour imaging laboratory at Cancer Research UK and in metabolomics at Cambridge University.

Reflecting on how to deliver our lecture

Lockdown and social distancing measures have led to the necessary cancellation of major events.

And as a health charity in the mix of campaigning during the pandemic, we want to ensure we take all measures possible to guarantee the safety of YOU, our supporters.

That is why we are developing contingency plans for our October Annual Lecture and our Great British Tea Party flagship campaign.

Attended by over 100 guests from academia, medicine, voluntary sector and media, last year’s Annual Lecture was our most popular so far. We are determined to build on that and raise awareness of antibiotic resistance and what our charity is doing to combat it.

Under consideration is live streaming of the event, which of course might open it up to viewers worldwide! But we also appreciate how much delegates enjoyed networking opportunities – and delivering that will be a priority, too.

You can meet the members of the Education Committee by visiting the Education Committee page of our website.

For more details on our Annual Lecture, scheduled for Thursday 22 October, email us on: info@antibioticresearch.org.uk

Help save lives by funding crucial research. Click to donate online
**Jodie joins the ranks**

An Antimicrobial Nurse Specialist who has been on the front line of Coronavirus treatment has joined Antibiotic Research UK’s thriving Patient Support team.

Jodie Christie (pictured) has nearly 20 years of employment in healthcare and shared her experiences of seeing her Aberdeen Royal Infirmary ward turned into a COVID-19 hub in a blog.

NHS Grampian has been supportive of Antibiotic Research UK’s work and even supplied runners for our fundraising activities. Jodie, who sits on a couple of national Antimicrobial Stewardship groups, has been designated one of their Specialist Antimicrobial specialist nurses – one of only four such posts in the whole of Scotland.

Already instrumental in establishing a private Facebook Group for patients to discuss drug-resistant infections, Jodie’s job will be to assist Arlene Brailey as our Patient Support function develops.

And they certainly don’t come more dedicated than Jodie, who travels 74 miles to and from her job at the Aberdeen hospital!

Learn more about Patient Support at: [https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/find-support/](https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/find-support/)

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**A farewell to our patron**

June marks the official retirement of The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, which also means he leaves his role as Patron of our charity.

From joining us on the podium at events to highlighting our cause in the media, his contribution to beating antibiotic resistance has been vital and hugely valued.

> In his Easter message, the Archbishop told the *Yorkshire Post*:

> "As Patron of Antibiotic Research UK, I have been reliably informed that most of our antibiotics are losing their effectiveness in treating bacterial infections. Primarily because the bacteria which are older than the human race are fighting back and unless we find an effective replacement, many infections will remain untreatable."

> As successor to his role as Archbishop, the Right Reverend Stephen Cottrell rightly noted in *The Daily Telegraph*:

> "I will receive the baton from Archbishop Sentamu. These aren’t just big shoes to fill, but a big heart and a big vision."
Just in case you’ve missed them

Antibiotic Research UK’s ramped-up website includes some fantastic – and moving – new patient stories. They include Helen (pictured here) who was wrongly diagnosed with a penicillin allergy as a child and subsequently failed to respond to other antibiotics becoming dangerously ill.

Read her story and those of other brave ambassadors at: https://www.antibioticresearch.org.uk/find-support/patient-stories/

Have your say, Vicki did on VE Day!

Traffic to our website has tripled over the last couple of months and a big factor has been our featured blogs. Though the lion’s share of copy has been provided by our Chief Executive; supporters, patients and volunteers have also played their part with Vicki Joughin with the able support of Canon Staples, producing some excellent fare on the links between Second World War penicillin and the current COVID outbreak.

If you would like to write a blog or suggest an idea, contact peter.gibson@antibioticresearch.org.uk

Got a story for our newsletter?

If you have something you want to feature in our newsletter, contact peter.gibson@antibioticresearch.org.uk or call 0759 202 8142

Learn more about Antibiotic Research UK and how you can donate and get involved by visiting our website: www.antibioticresearch.org.uk

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Help save lives by funding crucial research. Click to donate online.