

Addressing Superbug

What is the issue?

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- A US woman died due to such a superbug which heightened the global disquiet over the growing menace of antibiotics resistance.

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- Following this, WHO recently came out with its maiden list of antibiotic-resistant “priority pathogens”.

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What are superbugs?

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- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microbe to resist the effects of medication previously used to treat them.

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- A superbug is a strain of bacteria that has developed extreme AMR i.e become resistant to all available antibiotic drugs.

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What is the condition in India?

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- The superbug was first detected in 2008 in a Swedish patient of Indian origin who had travelled to this country for medical care.

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- This bug was subsequently named after the Indian capital as **New Delhi Metallo-beta-lactamase-1 (NDM-1)**.

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- In India, the abuse of antibiotics is most rampant.

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- Therefore it is a fertile ground for the growth of drug-tolerant bacteria.

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- Even the intensive care units and operation theatres of reputed hospitals and government healthcare facilities have been infested with it.

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What are the causes?

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- Patients generally tend to self-medicate with antibiotics even for ailments that do not require these medicines.

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- Doctors are prone to prescribing relatively more potent antibiotics meant for use as the last resort, for minor illnesses.

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- Chemists disregard all norms for dispensing antibiotics. They not only sell them without doctors' prescriptions but also assume the role of healthcare workers themselves to give these drugs to unwary customers.

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- The health authorities and drug regulators are also found inadequate in preventing microbial immunity from growing to risky scale. They have been too careless to regulate the manufacture, trade and use of antibiotics.

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What are the findings in the report?

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- The WHO has dubbed superbug as one of the biggest threats to global health.

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- It maintains that the misuse of antibiotics in humans and farm animals is accelerating the process of resistance development.

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- India has most of the 12 families of bacteria that was catalogued in the WHO list.

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- Most other countries are also witnessing an alarming uptrend in microbial resistance to antibiotics.

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What are the new challenges faced by the world?

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- The world is heading towards a post-antibiotics era when even common infections and minor injuries might prove fatal.
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- There is also no reliable alternative at hand to antibiotics.
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- All the researches to combat superbugs, but the work is still in a preliminary stage.
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- Besides, there is no guarantee that bacteria will not mutate to develop immunity against the new drug as well.

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What should be done?

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- A fairly good policy to tackle antibiotics resistance was formulated in 2011.
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- However, its implementation has been delayed.
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- Therefore the **ban on over-the-counter sale of antibiotics** has remained only on paper.
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- Therefore it is imperative to enforce antibiotics-dispensing norms effectively.
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- It is also to promote steps for the prevention of common diseases through better hygiene and improve the coverage of vaccination to obviate the need for using antibiotics.

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\n**Source: Business Standard**

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