



Department
of Health

FROM THE RT HON JEREMY HUNT MP
Secretary of State for Health

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Dear Mark,

**ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE – STIMULATING THE DEVELOPMENT
PIPELINE OF NEW ANTIMICROBIAL DRUGS**

In September of last year, the UK's Five Year Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Strategy set out the range of areas in which action was required in order to address the growing global threat of increasing resistance. I am grateful for the continued commitment that you and your Department have given to the implementation of the many domestic aspects of this alongside work on your own national AMR Strategy and action plan.

One element of the AMR problem identified by the UK Strategy – and since also recognised in May's World Health Assembly resolution on AMR – was the lack of a sustainable development pipeline of new antimicrobial drugs. I am writing to inform you of the establishment of an independent commission to look at this particular topic, to be announced by the Prime Minister on 2 July.

As I am sure you will already be aware, the unpredictable nature of the development of resistance to antimicrobial drugs, and the essential measures in place to ensure proper stewardship of them, mean that pharmaceutical companies cannot be confident of achieving a reasonable return on their investment in R&D on new antimicrobials. As a consequence, most major pharmaceutical companies have cut back or stopped altogether their investment in this area, and no new class of antibiotic has come to market in more than 25 years.



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Urgent action is thus needed to stimulate investment in the development of new antibiotics, and to ensure a sustainable pipeline of new drugs to save lives for future generations. However, the global nature of pharmaceutical markets means that this is not an issue which can be adequately addressed by the UK acting in isolation.

The Prime Minister has therefore decided to establish an independent, internationally-facing commission to review the evidence on the topic, and to recommend steps which may be taken by governments internationally to stimulate the development pipeline. Jim O'Neill has kindly agreed to lead this work upon conclusion of the City Growth Commission in the autumn. He will be supported by staff seconded from my Department and from HM Treasury, with the commission being hosted and part-funded by the Wellcome Trust.

The commission will look at all aspects of the issue, from the root causes of the market failures which currently hinder investment, to the full range of solutions which might correct them, including innovative models of funding and public-private partnerships. Jim O'Neill and his team will engage widely with international partners (including low- and middle-income countries), multilateral bodies, academia, and industry. I anticipate that the work will last two years, with the commission's initial findings being delivered in 2015 and then followed by a period of international consensus-building, to culminate in the delivery of a final recommended package of action in 2016. Given the global nature of the problem, the commission will clearly need to have international legitimacy, and thanks to the efforts of my officials and their FCO counterparts we have built support amongst key international partners – including G7 member nations, the WHO and European Commission – to take the initiative in this way and to drive forward action on the issue.

I hope that you will join me in welcoming the establishment of this commission as an important step towards tackling this particularly complex aspect of the AMR problem, and one which is of growing international concern. I have asked my officials to ensure that they keep their counterparts on AMR issues in your own Department up to date on progress with the establishment of Jim O'Neill's review and its work.



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I am writing in similar terms to Edwin Poots and Alex Neil.

JEREMY HUNT