



## **For Immediate Release**

**Contact:** John Heys, (703) 299-0412, [jheys@idsociety.org](mailto:jheys@idsociety.org)

### **U.S. and European Experts Applaud Creation of New Transatlantic Task Force on Global Antibiotic Resistance Threat**

Thursday, Nov. 5—Experts on both sides of the Atlantic applaud President Barack Obama and Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, representing the European Union (EU) Presidency, for establishing a transatlantic task force to address antibiotic resistance, an urgent and growing problem that threatens patient safety and public health worldwide. During a summit held this week in Washington, D.C., President Obama and Prime Minister Reinfeldt joined forces to address the urgency of the problem and the need for solutions by signing an international agreement that seeks cooperative ways in which the United States and EU countries can help combat the global health crisis.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified antimicrobial resistance as one of the three greatest threats to human health. Antimicrobial drugs are used around the world to fight viral diseases, like 2009 H1N1 influenza; bacterial infections, like *Staphylococcus aureus* and tuberculosis; parasitic infections, like malaria; and fungal infections. Many of these pathogens are becoming increasingly resistant to antimicrobials.

“Antimicrobial resistance and the lack of new antimicrobial agents to effectively treat resistant infections are problems that no country can deal with alone—they threaten the very foundation of medical care,” said Richard Whitley, MD, FIDSA, president of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA). “Without effective antimicrobial drugs, modern medical treatments such as operations, transplants, intensive care, cancer treatment and care of premature babies will become very risky if not impossible.” Dr. Whitley joined with Javier Garau, MD, president of European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) and Shelley A. Hearne, managing director of the Pew Health Group in welcoming the multi-country initiative.

“We are thrilled to see the United States and European Union take this important first step to control the spread of serious and life-threatening antimicrobial resistant organisms and to advance the development of much-needed antimicrobial drugs,” said Dr. Garau. “Clinicians, scientists, public health experts, veterinarians, economists and health policy experts all have critical roles to play in ensuring the success of this cooperative effort, which will benefit people around the world.

The task force will begin its work by identifying and agreeing on important issues related to antimicrobial resistance, in areas including the appropriate use of antimicrobial drugs in medical and veterinary communities, prevention of both health care- and community-associated drug-resistant infections, and strategies for improving the antimicrobial drug pipeline. The task force also will produce concrete action plans that build on international cooperation and provide regular reports on the initiative's progress.

“Antibiotic resistant bacteria respect no political borders, so we must work together to combat them,” Dr. Hearne said. “Resistance takes a terrible toll on health worldwide and is measured in lives lost, greater suffering and higher health care costs. One way that U.S. leaders can demonstrate their commitment to solving this issue is by immediately joining the EU in banning non-judicious antibiotic uses in food animal production.”

Drug-resistant infections kill tens of thousands of people in the United States each year. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) alone infects more than 94,000 people and kills nearly 19,000 Americans every year, more deaths than caused by emphysema, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson's disease, and homicide. A new interactive map on IDSA's [website](#) describes in detail the local impact of these and other resistant infections across the nation with detailed U.S. state-specific information.

Two recent European reports, similar to IDSA's 2004 “Bad Bugs, No Drugs” [report](#), describe the growing problem of antibiotic resistance in Europe and highlight possible strategies to stimulate the development of new drugs. Approximately 25,000 people die each year in Europe from just five resistant infections analyzed in one [report](#), drafted by the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA). The other major [report](#), from the London School of Economics and Political Science, outlines possible policy options and incentives to kick start research and development into new antimicrobial drugs and diagnostics. Both reports are available at: [http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings\\_news/2009/9/17/conference\\_innovative\\_incentives\\_for\\_effective\\_antibacterials](http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/9/17/conference_innovative_incentives_for_effective_antibacterials)

“The next step forward must be to bring together an interdisciplinary group of experts from the scientific, medical, public health and economic communities to establish international priorities and develop a joint plan for action,” Dr. Whitley said. “By exchanging best practices and sharing experiences from both continents, together we can begin developing a global solution to address this dangerous worldwide threat.”

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*The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) is an organization of physicians, scientists, and other health care professionals dedicated to promoting health through excellence in infectious diseases research, education, patient care, prevention and public health. The Society,*

*which has more than 8,600 members, was founded in 1963 and is based in Arlington, Va. For more information, see [www.idsociety.org](http://www.idsociety.org).*

*The European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infection-related diseases. This is achieved by promoting and supporting research, education, training, and good medical practice. For more information, see [www.escmid.org](http://www.escmid.org).*

*The Pew Health Group is the health and consumer product safety arm of The Pew Charitable Trusts, a nonprofit organization that applies a rigorous, analytical approach to improve public policy, inform the public and stimulate civic life. [www.pewtrusts.org/health](http://www.pewtrusts.org/health).*