

The Petri Dish

Welcome

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We are always looking for stories from Fellows and opportunities to share knowledge. If you have a story or articles you'd like featured in a future newsletter, please email us!



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We are almost at the end of the calendar year and many of you have been navigating the conference season and World Antimicrobial Awareness Week. Of the many exciting events, our own contribution, the Fellows Symposium, features in the Petri Dish this month.

With such busy work lives, I know how hard it can be to slow down and truly engage at online events. So, it was immensely gratifying to welcome so many participants at the event in November. In just two half-days we learnt about the personal achievements of both Fellows and mentors and it was good to have time to reflect. We also started looking forward at the topic of sustainability post-Fleming Fund.

In this issue I am very pleased to share with you more reflections on the Fellowship Scheme, this time from two mentors working with Cohort I Fellows in Pakistan. It is great to hear their perspective and I thank them for their contribution. You will find this on page 4.

I was privileged to attend the online launch of the WHO Collaborating Centre at the Doherty Institute, Melbourne University. It was exciting that one of the four speakers at the launch was Gabriella Ak, the AMR Laboratory Human Health Fellow from Papua New Guinea. Do listen to the recording to see what she has achieved. You'll find a link to this and an overview of the event on page 3.

On page 5 you will see our first Petri Dish contribution from Policy Fellows Musa Sekamatte and Michael Kimaanga, who attended the 6th International One Health Day celebration in Uganda. Finally, I would like to welcome Kiran Bajracharya our new AMR Surveillance, Human Health, Fellow in Nepal, who will be working with the Doherty Institute Host Institution and mentors.

With best wishes,



The 2021 Fellows Symposium Recap

The 2021 Fleming Fellows Symposium took place online on the 10th and 11th of November. Over 150 participants joined over the two half-day sessions. Amongst these participants were Fellows and mentors, as well as staff from Host Institutions, the Mott MacDonald Fleming Fund team, and representatives from the Department of Health and Social Care.

Day 1

On Day 1, Fellows and mentors discussed the themes: *Stories of Impact*, *Solutions in Action and Sustainability in Practice*. There was also a live survey to understand participants' experience with Fellowships and thoughts on sustaining the impact of Fellows' activities (see a survey response example below).



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Day 2

The 2nd day of the Symposium began with a keynote address from Dame Sally Davies, the UK Special Envoy on AMR. Acknowledging the work of the Fellows, Dame Sally said, "it's going to be people who turn the tide for AMR and so you are on the frontline of pushing back the AMR pandemic."

Dame Sally also thanked Fellows, Host Institutions and Beneficiary Institutions for their hard work and commitment to the Fellowships, especially during the pandemic. "You've been a model for the rest of the world, many of you have worked in your institutions to pass on the knowledge that you've gained. And this is what is going to make the difference and raise the bar of health systems across the world. It's you," said Dame Sally, putting the Fellowships in a global context.

Panel discussions on Day 2 included *Policy Fellow Perspectives* and the *Fellow and Mentor Pair Spotlight*. These panels were followed by a group discussion to review the survey results from the previous day and explore how activities can be sustained once Fellowships end.

Acknowledgements

A big 'Thank You' goes to all the Fellows and mentors who took up speaker and chair roles on panels and worked on shaping their presentation and discussion topics over several weeks. The Symposium Steering Committee was also instrumental in creating a diverse, informative and thought-provoking programme.

Thank you as well to all attendees for managing time-zone challenges in order to join this event. While the online setting allows us to include a wide number of attendees, we understand that a virtual event presents challenges to engage and connect with others. So we greatly appreciate everyone who participated in the survey, group discussion, virtual tea sessions and Q&A's following panel talks.

What's Next

We are collating Q&A responses, panel summaries and discussion notes in a Symposium Proceedings document which will be circulated in the New Year.

We would like to include your thoughts on this year's event and what you would like to see next year. To help us do this, please fill out [the Symposium Survey](#) and we will include the results in the Proceedings.

Fellowship News

Doherty Institute celebrates launch of WHO Collaborating Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance

The Doherty Institute, Host Institution for Fellows across PNG, Timor-Leste, Bhutan, Nepal and Pakistan, has been designated as a [WHO Collaborating Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance \(AMR\)](#).

The Collaborating Centre was launched on 19th November as part of the celebrations for World Antimicrobial Awareness Week. Hosted online, the event brought together more than 100 partners and collaborators from across the Western Pacific region to celebrate the launch of the Collaborating Centre. Participants at the event shared experiences and learning from working on the frontline against the rising threat of AMR, and discussed ways to reduce the impact of AMR.



“Our multi-disciplinary team will leverage existing partnerships and expertise from across the Doherty Institute, to implement the Collaborating Centre activities,” said University of Melbourne Professor Ben Howden, Co-Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance. “Key activities include guidance and training, the development of evidence-based policies and the advancement of AMR National Plans and the WHO’s AMR framework, across our three programs of work; laboratory diagnosis and surveillance, infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship.”

During the event, Doherty Institute partners presented their experiences working locally to reduce the spread of AMR.

Papua New Guinea Fleming Fellow, Dr Gabriella Ak, spoke about her work and achievements at the Port Moresby General Hospital through the Doherty Institute’s mentor program.

“There have been successful outcomes as a result of the AMR capacity activities I’ve implemented through the grant,” said Dr Ak.

“We’ve added Meropenem, a carbapenem-type antibiotic used to treat a wide range of bacterial infections, to our formulary; commenced in-house production of alcohol-based hand rub for the hospital; improved communication of microbiology results by establishing clinical WhatsApp groups; and strengthened infection prevention and control through committees and hand hygiene protocol.”

To watch the event and Dr Gabriella Ak’s presentation, [click here](#).

Welcome New Fellows

This month, we are welcoming a new Cohort II Fellow from Nepal. You can learn more about their professional backgrounds and motivation to join the Fellowship Scheme in the biography below.

Join us in welcoming Kiran.



Kiran Sunder Bajracharya – AMR Surveillance, Human Health (Nepal)

I am a pharmacy officer currently working in the Department of Drug Administration within the Ministry of Health and Population in Nepal. I completed my Masters of Pharmacy, with a focus on pharmaceutical care.

I am part of a drug evaluation team, and a member and secretary of the drug pricing committee. I am also involved in the antimicrobial consumption data collection process in Nepal.

There are lots of challenges to collect, process, analyse and report on drug consumption data in Nepal. Some of these challenges are due to lack of resources and legal reporting requirements. We have been working on designing a sustainable system for regular antimicrobial reporting and using the data for policy decision making in a resource-limited countries like Nepal.

I hope these Fellowships will help us build and strengthen an integrated approach to address antimicrobial use at the national level. This will be a step forward in designing a suitable and sustainable system in a resource-limited setting.

Field Notes

The Fleming Fellowships – A journey from the mentors' perspective **Abdul Chagla and Katherine Heitz (American Society for Medicine)**

Fleming Fellowships have provided valuable contributions towards the goal of lowering antimicrobial resistance rates. In Pakistan, six Fellowships were awarded in 2019 – three related to Human Health and three on Animal Health. The American Society for Microbiology was selected as the Host Institution to deliver and monitor Fellowship activities, and to provide mentorship to Fellows.

After the selection process of prospective Fleming Fellows, an introductory workshop was held in Islamabad, Pakistan in the fall of 2019. During this meeting, Fellows were introduced to staff from Mott McDonald, the management agent appointed for the Fleming Fellowship Scheme. During this initial meeting, Fellows were presented with their respective Terms of References (ToRs) along with goals and objectives for their Fellowships.



Mentors, Fellows and Mott MacDonald staff meeting at the Fellows' workshop in Islamabad.

(Photo from Abdul Chagla)

Fellows and mentors then used the ToRs to develop detailed workplans that included activities, budgets and timelines. Workplans also provided frameworks to monitor and evaluate Fellows' progress on activities.

While waiting for workplan approval, we witnessed the early shades of the COVID-19 pandemic. This affected initial timelines as Fellows were assigned extra duties to assist in dealing with the pandemic.

In the ensuing period Fellows, with guidance from their mentors, began their Fellowship journey and focused on required deliverables. Some of the timelines and budgets had to be re-adjusted due to restrictions; most notably was the impact of travel restrictions on training stakeholder/partner laboratories and pharmaceutical dispensing agencies. To compensate for the loss of time due to the pandemic, an extra three months were added to the Fellows' timeline.

From the mentorship perspective, it is very encouraging to report that, despite pandemic roadblocks, the Fellows have done extremely well. They achieved most of the deliverables that were outlined in their workplans. They also participated in Fleming Fellows webinars and interacted with staff from the Pakistan Fleming Fund Country Grants.

Overall, as mentors, we are pleased that the Fellows were able to:

- Support and augment goals and objectives outlined in the National Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Plan.
- Enhance laboratory capacity to provide best practice guidance (quality management) in receiving, storing and collecting AMR related microbes, organizing biorepositories and expanding existing External Quality Assurance Systems (EQAS).
- Provide training on data collection, and collecting AMR surveillance data from Beneficiary Institution, National Institute of Health - Islamabad, and partner laboratories using WHONET AMR data software. The ongoing AMR data analysis is now a foundation for AMR evidence for policy makers in Pakistan.
- Collect Antimicrobial Use/Consumption data from different geographical regions of Pakistan

Above all, in the eyes of the mentors, this experience will hopefully empower Fellows to use their Fellowships as road maps, for themselves and other practitioners within Pakistan, to assess and reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance.

Field Notes

Fellows Feature at One Health Celebrations in Uganda

Uganda Policy Fellows Musa Sekamatte and Michael Kimaanga participated in the 6th International One Health Day celebration held in Mweya, Uganda on 2nd and 3rd November.

In presentations at the event, both Fellows spoke about their participation in the Fleming Fund's Policy Fellowships. They emphasised their collaboration with mentors and Host Institution, the University of Edinburgh, to address various problems of antimicrobial resistance.

They stated that the Fellowships are exciting opportunities to bring health-policy issues related to AMR to government institutions and make the case for why One Health policies are needed.

*Clockwise from left:
Musa Sekamatte, Human Health Policy Fellow;
Michael Kimaanga, Animal Health Policy Fellow;
Michael and Musa at the International One Health Day Celebration event*

(Photos from Musa Sekamatte)

