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'Effective antibiotic therapies declining'

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New Delhi: The overall mortality due to drug resistant bacteria in India is 13%, a study titled, 'The mortality burden of multidrug-resistant pathogens in India: a retrospective observational study', has said. The study has been published in Clinical Infectious Diseases, a global medical journal.

Pathogens that are associated with higher mortality rate include Staphylococcus aureus (it can cause a range of clinical manifestations, from minor skin problems to life-threatening infection of the inner lining of the heart), E Coli (it can cause diarrhea, while others cause urinary tract infections, respiratory illness and pneumonia, and other illnesses), Klebsiella pneumoniae (it can cause pneumonia and blood stream infections among others) and Acinetobacter baumannii (an opportunistic pathogen in humans, affecting people with compromised immune systems).

Ramanan Laxminarayan, founder and director of CDDEP in Washington DC, said infections caused by Gram-negative bacteria are associated with higher mortality rates compared to those caused by Gram-positive bacteria, with rates of 17.7 percent and 10.8 percent, respectively.

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"In India, MDR and XDR Gram-negative bacterial infections are frequent, and the availability of effective antibiotic therapies are declining. This study provides greater insight into the urgent need to increase surveillance, research, infection control and antimicrobial stewardship efforts in India hospitals," he said.

Laxminarayan added that the findings on the mortality burden of antibiotic resistance can aid in the development of policy

efforts to prioritise antibiotic resistance as a global public health threat and to inform future efforts to quantify and track the burden of resistance across low- and middle-income countries.

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Last year, World Health Organisation (WHO) published its first ever list of antibiotic-resistant 'priority pathogens' — a catalogue of 12 families of bacteria that pose the greatest threat to human health. The list was drawn up to promote research and development of new antibiotics, the global health agency said, adding that the move was part of efforts to address the problem of growing global resistance to antimicrobial medicines.

“Antibiotic resistance is growing and we are fast running out of treatment options. If we leave it to market forces alone, the new antibiotics we urgently need are not going to be developed in time,” said Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO’s assistant director-general for health systems and innovation.

New antibiotic development is important for especially for India because the bacterial diseases burden in our country is among the highest in the world. Forty percent of children are malnourished and at risk for infections. Also, a large population is immune-compromised on account of diseases such as diabetes, heart diseases and cancer, putting one at risk for infection.