PDP annual meeting at BioSciencePark

On 23 May 2018 the Netherlands Enterprise Agency hosted the annual PDP meeting themed “Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)” on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

During the morning session the PDPs and Dutch policy makers discussed a report commissioned by the PDP Funders’ Group on Access to Medicine. The importance of developing affordable and effective medicine was emphasized, considering the further challenges and need to make these products accessible to target populations. In order to achieve this, access should be taken into account at an early stage during the process of development of medicines. Suggestions were made about how to carry the work forward by all parties involved: PDPs, funding agencies and international agencies/global funds.

The evolution of the PDPs, including their increased focus on access, increased efforts in R&D, development of new partnerships, coverage of a broader range of health areas and growing interest in AMR were presented. Current and detailed information on each of the PDPs and their progress is available on their websites: IPM (International Partnership For Microbicides), IAVI (International AIDS Vaccine Initiative), FIND (Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics), DNDi (Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative), MMV (Medicines for Malaria Venture) and TB Alliance (Tuberculosis Alliance).

During the afternoon prominent speakers presented their organization’s efforts on reducing the detrimental effects of AMR. AMR is a global issue which particularly affects developing countries. Drug resistant bacteria cause 2 million infections annually, leading to 70,000 deaths globally. It is estimated this will increase to 10 million deaths annually by 2050, unless the emerging rise of AMR is prioritized on the agenda.

Harry Flore (HAL Allergy) informed the audience on the unique ecosystem of the Leiden BioSciencePark, which accommodates leading Dutch biotech and pharmaceutical companies combined with top academic research, focusing on translational drug research.

Gilles van Wezel (NCOH, Netherlands Centre for One Health) explained the strategies applied by the Leiden based “academic pharma” to discover new antibiotics. The “One Health” perspective to develop and implement durable intervention strategies through interdisciplinary collaboration in fields of human, animal, and environmental health has led to the isolation of antibiotic-producing bacteria.

Nathaniel Martin (Karveel Pharmaceuticals) narrated on the innovation gap in the field of antibiotics and the need for developing first-in-class antibiotic strategies for drug-resistant pathogens through a new, different approach. Karveel’s programmes includes research on semi-synthetic nisin attacking bacterial cell walls and on overcoming Metallo-beta-lactamase Driven Resistance in Gram-negative pathogens.

Jean-Pierre Paccaud (GARDP, Global Antibiotic Research & Development Partnership) started by clarifying causes of the AMR crisis. GARDP, a joint initiative of WHO and DNDi, is a non-profit R&D organization developing treatments for drug-resistant bacterial infections for which adequate treatment is not available. It addresses global health priorities that reflect the realities of clinical practice, prioritizing neonatal sepsis, sexually transmitted infections and paediatric antibiotics. GARDP’s programme ‘memory recovery and exploratory’ aims to revive old knowledge and abandoned projects and support early research on AMR.

Gabriëlle Breugelmans (Access to Medicine Foundation) brought the audience up to date on the AMR Benchmark: a new tool to map how pharmaceutical companies are tackling rising rates of drug-resistant infections.

Constance Schultz (Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development) emphasized that new products do not automatically achieve impact. World-class innovations may fail in real-life healthcare systems and simple solutions may have high impact. AMR-Global, a public private partnership, aims to tackle AMR through connecting people, facilitating innovation and achieving
impact by pursuing decisive breakthroughs by combining unique Dutch expertise and efforts to tackle AMR.

If we do not prioritize the need to challenge the emerging rise of AMR, AMR will become one of the most important societal challenges.