



Society of Actuaries in Ireland

Press Release
08th November 2018

Health expert warns on antimicrobial resistance

- *Biggest issue of intergenerational equity in health care is antimicrobial resistance (AMR) UK study projected more deaths could be attributed to AMR than cancer by 2050*
- *Structure of Ireland's primary care system does not lend itself to effective and concerted action to tackle more sustainable antibiotic use*
- *Ageing population is not the main issue for Irish healthcare*

Perhaps the biggest issue of intergenerational equity in health care is antimicrobial resistance (AMR), a leading healthcare actuary, Aisling Kennedy, told a conference in Dublin this morning (Thursday Nov 8).

Speaking at the Society of Actuaries in Ireland President's Conference "*Towards a Fairer Future: Health, Housing, Pensions - Finding Sustainable Solutions*", Ms Kennedy stated, "AMR is on the rise and the antibiotic development pipeline is lacking. The UK Review on Antimicrobial Resistance, published in 2016, projected that by 2050 10 million deaths worldwide every year could be attributable to AMR compared to 8.5 million for cancer. Although there is some debate around the mortality projections, I believe there is widespread acknowledgement that the achievements of modern medicine could be undermined by AMR as, for example, chemotherapy and surgeries such as caesarean sections or hip replacements become much more dangerous without effective antibiotics for the prevention and treatment of infections. Like climate change, AMR knows no borders and no country can solve the problem alone.

"Ireland's use of antibiotics is high and needs to be addressed. The most urgent and cost-effective action that we can take to curb this threat is to change behaviours towards more sustainable antibiotic use in medicine; also important, at a global level, is the use of antibiotics in farming. The structure of our primary care system, unfortunately, does not lend itself to effective and concerted action to tackle this kind of issue. Healthcare systems with universal access to GP care that is funded by government or compulsory insurance are much better positioned to tackle public health issues."

Ms Kennedy also told the conference that an ageing population is not the main issue for Irish healthcare, but that the expected demographic pressure will hopefully be one of the catalysts for much needed reform. "It is clear that many older people and people with chronic conditions who now depend on care in acute hospital settings could be treated far better and far more appropriately in other settings such as primary care and where possible at home. It would not only be better for them but it would also be less costly. But we need to develop those services in the community setting."

Looking at measures of health system performance such as the simple relationship of health care spend against life expectancy, Ms Kennedy told the conference that Ireland - along with many of the other high-spending countries - is performing less well on this measure.

The Society of Actuaries in Ireland President's Conference "*Towards a Fairer Future: Health, Housing, Pensions - Finding Sustainable Solutions*" also heard from pensions actuary Roma Burke, who proposed that workers should be able to borrow from their pensions savings to fund home purchase, and from Tom Dunne, Head of School of Surveying & Construction Management, DIT, who told the conference that mass home ownership is not sustainable, given changes in economic relations and society.

President of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland, Maurice Whyms, stated, "The Society is pleased to provide a platform for discussion on the key areas of Health, Housing and Pensions. The Actuarial profession is well placed to contribute to the development of solutions in each of these areas which are sustainable and which appropriately balance the needs of current and future generations."

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The views expressed are those of the presenters and not necessarily of the Society of Actuaries in Ireland or of their employers.

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Society of Actuaries in Ireland

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