

Combating Antimicrobial Resistance: Insights and Actions from WHX Labs Dubai 2026

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United scientists, clinicians, policymakers, and innovators to close the gap between research and action, addressing the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals, and agriculture that drive AMR. The AMR Leaders' Summit provides a global platform to drive collaboration, policy alignment and scientific innovation to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR)



World Health Expo (WHX) Labs in Dubai (formerly Medlab Middle East) was unveiled at the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from 10-13 February, featuring the flagship AMR Leaders' Summit on 12-13 February. Now in its 25th year, WHX Labs continues to play a leading role in the region's laboratory and diagnostics sector.

The AMR Leaders' Summit, a flagship event at WHX Labs Dubai 2026 (12-13 February), focused on combating the growing global threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The AMR Leaders' Summit provides a global platform to drive collaboration, policy alignment and scientific innovation to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), AMR could cause up to 10 million deaths and \$1 trillion in additional healthcare costs annually by 2050. It occurs when bacteria, viruses, and fungi become resistant to medications, worsening infection treatment outcomes and increasing the risks of severe illness, disability, and death. The summit aims to unite scientists, clinicians, policymakers, and innovators to close the gap between research and action, addressing the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals, and agriculture that drive AMR.

The opening day of the AMR Leaders' Summit will focus on the global and national response to AMR, with keynote insights from the WHO and regional public health leaders, alongside expert discussions on technology and innovation. Sessions will also explore genomics, equity in AMR policy and how hospital practices are expected to evolve by 2028.

H.E. Dr Faisal Musleh Al Ahbabi, Acting Executive Director, Communicable Diseases Sector, Abu Dhabi Public Health Centre opened the AMR Leaders' Summit with a session titled "Tackling AMR in Abu Dhabi: a strategic health priority." His Excellency emphasised that AMR is no longer a future risk or theoretical concern, but a present reality already shaping clinical outcomes, health system resilience, and health security in the UAE and globally.

His Excellency noted that while surveillance participation has increased, recent findings highlight the scale of the challenge. A 2025 WHO GLASS report indicated that more than 40% of monitored pathogen antibiotic combinations show increasing resistance. Rising resistance levels have been observed across a range of infections, including urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections and COVID-19-associated infections, with MRSA remaining a significant concern, particularly in the Middle East.

Highlighting regional progress, His Excellency stated that in 2024, Abu Dhabi's surveillance system collected more than 213 isolates in 2024 across 146 surveillance sites, supported by 18 clinical laboratories, reflecting strong participation and a robust surveillance sample.

Dr Souha Kanj, Professor of Medicine and Chair of the Infection Control and Prevention Program at the American University of Beirut (AUB), gave the opening keynote on antimicrobial resistance in conflict zones highlighting the unique clinical and public health challenges faced in fragile healthcare settings. Ahead of the summit, she stated: "Policy discussions often center on national action plans, regulatory frameworks, and governance structures, while recognizing that many countries—especially those impacted by conflict or economic instability—face challenges in fully implementing global AMR recommendations. The summit explores how policy can adapt to remain effective and flexible in fragile contexts where conventional health system models may not hold."

Disrupted health systems, fragile infrastructure, limited laboratory capacity, and interrupted supply chains is shaping the AMR scenarios. Emphasizing on this, Dr. Kanj said, "These realities are well documented in the Middle East and surrounding regions, where antimicrobial resistance is accelerating in parallel with humanitarian crises, population displacement, and weakened infection prevention and control measures".

Underscoring the importance of the summit, Dr Elamin said: "Antimicrobial resistance is no longer a future risk — it is a present and growing threat to global health security. Tackling AMR requires alignment across policy, diagnostics, clinical practice and innovation. The AMR Leaders' Summit at WHX Labs Dubai is designed to move beyond discussion and drive practical solutions that enhance surveillance, support responsible antimicrobial use and protect patient outcomes worldwide."

The Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) is a global framework designed to standardise and strengthen the collection, analysis and sharing of data on AMR. By providing comparable, high-quality data, GLASS helps inform policy decisions, guide clinical practice and shape international strategies to combat AMR.

The event was chaired by Dr. Wael Elamin, Medical Director of Environmental Sciences at M42, with co-chairs including Prof. Abiola Senok, Chair of Basic Medical Sciences and Professor of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases at MBRU; Dr. Kavita Diddi, President of the Emirates Society of Clinical Microbiology (ESCM); and Dr. Seema Oommen, Section Head of Microbiology and Infectious Molecular at Burjeel Medical City.

The second day of the AMR Leaders' Summit shifted the focus to leadership, innovation and One Health approaches, highlighting lessons from Africa and the Middle East in areas such as genomic surveillance, epidemiology and the environmental determinants of AMR. Throughout the programme, open-mic sessions and networking opportunities will encourage dialogue between stakeholders, reinforcing the summit's objective of moving beyond awareness toward coordinated, implementable actions that strengthen global AMR preparedness and healthcare resilience.

Tom Coleman, Group Exhibition Director, Informa Markets Healthcare added: "The first-ever AMR Leaders' Summit at WHX Labs Dubai 2026 aims to support international efforts to safeguard antibiotic effectiveness and strengthen healthcare resilience for the future. The programme is designed to bring together global expertise and accelerate practical, real-world action against antimicrobial resistance."

WHX Labs Dubai will provide a platform for dealmaking, networking and knowledge exchange, while addressing some of the most pressing challenges in laboratory science. The event is held under the patronage of the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention, reinforcing the nation's commitment to delivering world-leading healthcare.

Marking a quarter of a century of success, WHX Labs Dubai will be held under the theme "*25 years of laboratory innovation: Uniting Communities for better health*" and will present an international showcase of excellence in laboratories, diagnostics and precision medicine.

The forum further explored themes including leadership in post-pandemic medicine and strategies to combat AMR in Africa. Among the featured speakers, Garance Upham, CEO of XpertOneHealth and President of the AMR Think-Do-Tank will emphasise the importance of understanding the environmental determinants of AMR.

Rejoy Penacerrada, Conference Director, Informa Markets, said: "Antimicrobial resistance is one of the most pressing healthcare issues of our time. The AMR Leaders' Summit at WHX Labs provides a crucial space for global experts to share research, exchange insights, and strengthen collaboration through in-person dialogue."