New drugs alone will not save us from the dark ages

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Pet charity The Bella Moss Foundation (BMF) responds to Government's review of the global antibiotics market.

BMF secretary Mark Dosher said:

"The production of future generations of these drugs is a double-edged sword – the creation of new drugs encourages their usage, but through adaptation bacteria will start to build up resistance – it's inevitable.

"A one health approach needed – humans and animals share common problems when it comes to Antimicrobial resistance (AMR), therefore they need a common solution – yes, new antibiotics can be part of the solution but this can't just be solved by pharmacology alone.

"Broader factors like hygiene and the environment these bugs live in need to be taken into account. For example, there are things we can do now with the environments in hospitals that could have an effect today – such as paint that kills bacteria when activated by light, or ventilation additives.

"It has to be recognised that new antibiotics could result in new resistant pathogens so we have to look into other areas, from hygiene and environment to the lifestyle of individuals and which people – and animals – are more prone to infection.

"David Cameron's task force is a good idea – as long as it doesn't solely focus on the cost and regulation of new drugs. Just concentrating on financial incentives for health companies to create new drugs would be a mistake in the long-term. Politicians and human healthcare and veterinary professionals need to look at collaboration and the big picture.

"We need to be looking 50-100 years into the future – anything other than that will just repeat mistakes with AMR that have already been made."

Edinburgh vet school academic and BMF advisor Tim Nuttal added:

"While I very much welcome the focus on antimicrobial resistance with the Longitude Prize and the Prime Minister's involvement, there is a narrow focus on developing new drugs.

"Without also developing and implementing strategies to reduce antimicrobial use, to use these drugs more wisely, and to develop non-antibiotic ways to manage bacterial infections, we could find ourselves in exactly the same position. It is also disappointing that the one-health nature of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance hasn't been given more prominence."