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**Meet the human face of the looming global antibiotic crisis**

“If we don’t have drugs to kill these increasingly stubborn infections, we will be compelled to surgically remove infected limbs”.

Sandra Hocking was in Zambia inspecting the school her church group had raised money for and built for orphans.

Her trip was cut short though, when she picked up an antibiotic-resistant infection after stepping into an uncovered service-hole on the street at dusk, seriously injuring her ankle. “They dragged me out and lay me on the median strip, she said. My ankle was a mangled mess and I was bleeding. I assume that’s when I picked up the bug”.

After a month in a Johannesburg hospital and more procedures back in Melbourne, Sandra returned home to Whittlesea in Melbourne’s north. But her skin graft soon failed. “I woke up one morning to see that the graft was compromised and the ankle badly infected,” she said. “I sat on the side of my bed and cried”.

Her GP sent her immediately to the Austin Hospital’s infectious diseases team, led by Prof Lindsay Grayson. He identified the bug as Pseudomonas aeruginosa and his team set about developing a plan of action. “We knew that this bug was resistant to almost all known antibiotics, and we knew that the infection in Sandra’s ankle and bone would, unless stopped, spread to her leg.

“If we don’t have drugs to kill these increasingly stubborn infections, we will be compelled to surgically remove infected limbs”, he said.
“We need people to understand that if we continue to recklessly misuse and overuse antibiotics as we have for the past 50-70 years, doctors will be faced with the choice to amputate infected limbs or risk their patients’ lives.

But the modern dilemma just keeps getting worse. “To conduct surgery safely, we need hospitals to be clear of multi-resistant organisms, or superbugs. We might cut off a leg to stop an infection only to introduce another infection”, he said. It’s a cruel and unwelcome thought, but that’s why 300 of Australia’s most eminent infectious diseases professionals will meet on Thursday at a Summit in Melbourne to agree on plans to slow the spread of antibiotic resistance, starting with a new coordinating body to oversee the work.

“Because resistance can be developed by the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in food production as well as human healthcare, we need a co-ordinating body that oversees the use of antimicrobials in humans and animals. Without an emphasis on both, we won’t get the improvements required to pull back from the precipice” said Prof Cheryl Jones, President of Australasian Society for Infectious Disease (ASID).

Australia’s Chief Medical Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer will address Thursday’s Summit and contribute to panel discussions. “The most senior clinicians in the land have identified AMR as a personal priority and we look forward to getting to work and actually responding to the challenges we’re faced with,” said Jones.

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