



Interview with Dr. Christopher Houchens, Project Officer from the Anti-Infectives (AI) Program Division of CBRN Countermeasures, BARDA

The 18th annual conference on “**Superbugs & Superdrugs**” returns to London this March and is thrilled to have Dr. Christopher Houchens from **BARDA** as one of the keynote speakers for 2016.

Christopher Houchens, PhD joined the US Government’s **Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA)** as a Health Scientist. With over 25 years of drug development experience ranging from early stage disease research to late stage, Chris currently leads multiple interdisciplinary product development teams responsible for advancing the development, evaluation, and regulatory approval of novel drugs against multidrug resistant organisms, emerging infectious diseases, and bio-threat agents.



Prior to joining BARDA, he served as a Senior Scientist at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency where he managed translational research and development programs to rapidly design, manufacture and evaluate novel medical countermeasures.

Hear more from Dr Christopher Houchens at Superbugs & Superdrugs 2016. Extending portfolio partnerships to strengthen the antibiotic pipeline will be the topic of the exclusive address which will provide case study insight on current partnerships and address BARDA's efforts to combat antibiotic resistant infections. Attendees will also learn about BARDA funding opportunities and future research collaborations.

Q. About you – what is your role and what perspective do you bring to the conference?

I am a health scientist and project manager in BARDA’s Anti-Infectives Branch. In this role, I work with product developers, from small biotech to large global pharmaceutical companies, to develop new and effective antibiotics to counter the global threat of antimicrobial resistance. I work across the US Government to ensure that our R&D programs and funding priorities are in alignment and with international organizations to explore opportunities for collaboration. During this conference, I would like to discuss how BARDA works with industry to identify partnership opportunities and mechanisms by which we support the development of promising antimicrobial products, and new initiatives and funding opportunities that we have available to us to support both.

Q. What will attendees take away from your talk?

Upon completion of my presentation, I am expecting that attendees will gain a greater understanding of how BARDA enters into strategic partnerships with industry to advance the development of promising products to counter the growing global threat of antimicrobial resistance. I am also hoping to convey to the audience BARDA’s commitment to work with both our federal and international partners to develop solutions to address this threat. Lastly, I will provide clear guidance to all parties that may have interest in learning more about BARDA as well as mechanisms to partner with BARDA on the development of new antimicrobial products.

Q: To what extent is antimicrobial resistance a serious global threat?

Antimicrobial resistance represents a serious and immediate global health threat to both developed and developing nations alike. In the U.S. alone, antimicrobial resistant bacterial pathogens are responsible for 2M infections and 23,000 deaths annually with an estimated annual economic burden of \$35B. Globally, 300 million people are expected to die prematurely and GDP will be 2 to 3.5% lower due to AMR by 2050. In the near future, routine medical procedures and operations that we currently take for granted may become too risky due to the high risk of death from drug-resistant bacterial infections. This is the result of the pace of antibacterial drug development not keeping pace with the rate of resistance development.

Q: Industry Incentives – how important are they and what has worked in the past?

All antibiotics will eventually fail due to bacterial pathogens evolving resistance to those products. As such, continued development of novel antibiotics is critical to ensuring that the international community will continue to have access to safe and effective antibiotics to treat infections due to newly evolved antibiotic-resistant bacteria. However, industry has a fiduciary responsibility to represent shareholder positions which means ensuring maximum return on shareholder investments. Such a model does not support the development of antibiotic products that generate limited returns on investment due to their limited population usage and their eventual failure. This represents an opportunity for governments and other organizations to partner with industry to address this market failure and ensure that the international community will continue to have access to safe and effective antibiotics to treat drug-resistant bacterial infections. The US Government has demonstrated the success of such public-private partnership models by entering into collaborations with multiple industry partners that include both small biotechs, which lacked the capital and infrastructure to continue the research and development toward approval of promising products, and large pharmaceutical companies that had either abandoned or were about to leave the antibiotic development space. It is our continued hope that by working with our current and future industry partners, either directly or through collaboration with other international organizations, that we will be able to ensure continued global access to promising novel antibiotics in the future.

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Holiday Inn Kensington Forum, London, UK
www.superbugssuperdrugs.com