

# Health Dept. launches awareness campaign to stem rampant over-the-counter sales of antibiotics

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**The Hindu Bureau**  
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Raising concerns over pharmacies selling antibiotics over the counter without a prescription, Karnataka's Health Department on Friday launched an awareness drive on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

This follows a survey conducted by the Department, which found that nearly 80% of the 105 pharmacies where a "test-purchase" drive was conducted sold antibiotics over the counter.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao, who launched the drive on Friday (August 16) at Cash Pharmacy on St Mark's Road in the city, said display boards informing people that antibiotics should be purchased only with a



Display boards informing people that antibiotics should be purchased only with a doctor's prescription are being put up in all pharmacies.

FILE PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

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The Minister, who visited five pharmacies for the campaign, said, "Cases have been booked against 27 pharmacies by the State Drugs Con-

trol Department for indulging in activities that are contrary to the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945, as well as other applicable laws, which are

directly contributing to the increase in antimicrobial resistance," the Minister said.

## Most-affected country

Stating that AMR is a critical global health challenge, the Minister said India is one of the countries most affected by this issue. "People should complete the course of antibiotics as prescribed by the doctor and should not use old prescriptions to self-medicate and this public appeal is part of the display boards," he said.

"The display boards are meant to sensitise people as well as the pharmacies on AMR that occurs when microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites evolve to resist the effects of medications, rendering standard treatments

ineffective and leading to persistent infections. It is caused by the widespread misuse of antibiotics in human medicine, agriculture, and veterinary practices and challenges in healthcare infrastructure," he said.

"Self-medication and the use of antibiotics for viral infections, against which they are ineffective, are common practices. AMR is among the top three causes of death in India," he said.

## Test-purchase drive

Swetavalli Raghavan, One Health expert who is advising Karnataka's Health Department on developing a State action plan for AMR, said that the "test-purchase" drive in 105 pharmacies in the city that ended last week revealed that over 80% of the

105 pharmacies sold antibiotics over the counter.

"Out of the remaining 20% who refrained, one out of three did not sell because they did not have stock. Also, over 50% of these 105 pharmacies did not give us a bill until we insisted. A quarter of these were handwritten," she said.

The drive was conducted with support of volunteering students from St Joseph's University. The students visited the 105 pharmacies in the city to purchase antibiotics, she said. Pointing out that over 17,000 pharmacists and pharmacology students have been trained on AMR sensitisation, Ms Raghavan said a second round of 'test-purchases' will be done soon to check if the intervention has helped.