

Startups can play crucial role on AMR concerns: Dinesh Gundu Rao

BENGALURU, DHNS: Startups can address concerns of over-the-counter access to antibiotics that contribute to Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and help reduce associated mortality, health minister Dinesh Gundu Rao told startups and researchers at the Bangalore Bioinnovation Centre on Friday.

A recent report by The Lancet predicted that an estimated 1.91 million deaths would be attributable to AMR and another 8.22 million deaths will be associated with AMR globally in 2050.

This year's theme for World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week is "Educate, Advocate, Act Now." In line with this, Gundu Rao relayed to startups Karnataka's commitment to making AMR a focus area, requiring action that is citizen-driven and government-supported.

He noted that the overuse of antibiotics in agriculture and livestock is a big contributor to AMR, so startups' innovation to tackle that is also welcome.

Swetavalli Raghavan, advisor to the state on AMR and One Health,

said that startups, with their "agility, creativity, innovation culture and faster bench-to-market timelines," play a critical role in addressing AMR.

She highlighted how they could contribute in terms of devising AI-driven decision support and prescription monitoring systems to track antibiotic use, mobile apps for citizen awareness, big data platforms and dashboards to help in data analysis, and use AI to predict future resistance trends.

She highlighted regulatory and supply chain innovations such

as improving the global supply chain to ensure that antibiotics are delivered on time, and blockchain-based systems that track the origin and use of antibiotics, besides models for pricing and distribution to make antibiotics more affordable and accessible.

Swetavalli also presented a funding model for these ideas, with a push incentive by big pharma companies to fund startups and a pull incentive from the government, that can act as a buyer of a novel innovation developed by the startups.