



Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

Terms of Reference

Kotahitanga: Uniting Aotearoa against infectious diseases and antimicrobial resistance

Background

In 2018, our Office published a short summary detailing why antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses an imminent threat to Aotearoa New Zealand.¹ Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has turned the threat of infectious disease into reality and shown how vulnerable we are to infectious disease when effective treatment is not available. A silver lining from the COVID-19 pandemic may be that people now understand the social disruption from an untreatable infection and consequently there is social and cultural licence to take infectious disease more seriously.

Aim of project

This project seeks to build on our short AMR summary and other local reports and workstreams² to provide a localised and detailed evidence synthesis and recommendations to mitigate the risk of infectious disease and AMR in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This would be valuable to:

- Remind officials and the public of the continuing importance of infectious disease and the potential impact of increasing AMR, and inspire action in these areas.
- Examine the impacts of COVID-19 on development of AMR and efforts to counter it.
- Ensure that planning for the next pandemic does not focus exclusively on viruses and includes the potential for a pandemic caused by a drug-resistant microorganism.

We will convene a diverse panel of local experts to steer the project, specifically including people with expertise on how infectious disease spreads in and affects our more vulnerable communities and how to prevent this. Throughout the project, the team will also engage with a wider reference group of stakeholders to receive their input and feedback.

Draft scope

The scope for the project will be finalised in conjunction with the expert panel at the first panel meeting. The research will be evidence-based and aim to provide a holistic approach to addressing infectious disease and AMR in Aotearoa New Zealand.

¹ <https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/topics/emerging-hot-topics/antimicrobial-resistance/>

² Including but not limited to: Royal Society Te Apārangi, "Antimicrobial Resistance – Implications for New Zealanders Evidence Update", 2017; Ministry of Health and Ministry for Primary Industries, "Antimicrobial Resistance: New Zealand's Current Situation and Identified Areas for Action.", 2017

Summary of workstreams

- 1. Context:** This workstream will analyse the global and local context and explain the approach taken for the report.
- 2. Prevention and risk mitigation of infectious diseases.** Prevention is better than cure. This workstream will focus on general solutions to reducing the incidence of infections in Aotearoa, and policy levers to pull, including discussion of challenges and barriers to each approach.
- 3. Infectious diseases in Aotearoa New Zealand:** This workstream will take an Aotearoa New Zealand-specific focus, summarising the evidence for infectious diseases (human, animal, plant) and highlight the diseases of particular concern and knowledge gaps for Aotearoa New Zealand. We will then have three 'spotlight' workstreams to highlight general issues and solutions for specific infections of concern.
- 4. Spotlight on drug-resistant infections in Aotearoa New Zealand:** This workstream will focus on the threat of drug-resistant infections (antimicrobial resistance, AMR) as the big slow-burning pandemic for infectious diseases, summarising Aotearoa New Zealand-specific evidence (human, animal, plant and presence in the environment), knowledge gaps, and local solutions. It will not be a comprehensive review of all drug-resistant infections but will discuss some infections in Aotearoa that illustrate the emerging threat of AMR, e.g. methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), urinary tract infections and gonorrhoea.
- 5. Spotlight on group A *Streptococcus* and rheumatic fever in Aotearoa New Zealand:** This workstream will focus on a specific infection and its major complication that highlights the issues with health inequities, issues with access to antimicrobials, and limited accessibility of antibiotics. It will examine holistic solutions to infection prevention and control.
- 6. Spotlight on *Campylobacter* infections in Aotearoa New Zealand:** This workstream will focus on a food- and water-borne infection that has high and growing incidence rates in Aotearoa New Zealand and emerging risk of drug-resistant strains, and will examine specific solutions to reduce these rates.

Process

- Call for nominations of the expert panel and wider reference group will be sought from the key institutional contact lists. The panel shortlisting will actively seek to support a diverse and balanced panel. Expert panel approached to guide the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in preparing the report.
- Wide stakeholder engagement will be included with an open reference group process.
- The membership of the panel and wider reference group will be public and processes open.
- The panel will provide guidance to the Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor in preparing a summary of the peer-reviewed evidence and developing recommendations.
- Once a draft has been agreed by the group, the material will be circulated to a wider group of experts for peer review.
- The report will be delivered to the Prime Minister and later made public on the PMCSA website.

Timeline

March 2021	Project scope drafted Call for nominations via key institutional contacts
April 2021	Panel established Project scope and panel membership uploaded onto PMCSA website
May-September 2021	Research and engagement
October-November 2021	Finalising report
December 2021	Likely release date