

Opening Remarks at AMR Policy Fellowship Workshop

February 14th, 2025 (At NCGM, Tokyo, Japan)

Yasuhisa Shiozaki, Member of Global Leaders Group on AMR

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this momentous occasion—the inaugural presentation of achievements by the first cohort of Dame Sally Davies / Mr. Yasuhisa Shiozaki AMR Policy Fellows.

To stand here today, honoring the contributions of my esteemed colleague Dame Sally Davies, and to witness the realization of a fellowship that bears both our names, is an immense joy.

This fellowship embodies our shared commitment to advancing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) policy and action, and today, we celebrate not only the accomplishments of these remarkable fellows but also the profound partnership between the United Kingdom and Japan in tackling one of the most pressing health challenges of our time.

This initiative, *The Future of Antibiotics: A New Partnership for Discovery*, was officially launched in March 2024 during the Japan–UK High–Level Scientific Policy Workshop at the National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGM), followed by a reception at the British Embassy in Tokyo.

Led by Warwick University, this program has successfully brought together stakeholders from academia, government, and industry, forging a strong ecosystem dedicated to antimicrobial discovery and policy innovation.

At its core, this fellowship seeks to identify, nurture, and empower the next generation of leaders who will drive transformative progress in AMR research and policy. The success of this first cohort serves as a testament to the program's significance, and I am inspired by the dedication and ingenuity of these fellows.

For over a decade, I have championed AMR as a political priority, recognizing its far-reaching consequences. AMR threatens not only lives but also the very foundations of modern medicine.

The figures are staggering: in 2019 alone, bacterial AMR was responsible for 1.27 million deaths, contributing to nearly 5 million deaths worldwide.

The unchecked misuse and overuse of antimicrobials across human, animal, and agricultural sectors exacerbate this crisis, rendering once-treatable infections deadly and placing essential medical procedures—such as surgeries, caesarean sections, and cancer treatments—at serious risk.

Addressing this crisis demands unwavering international cooperation and sustained commitment. Last year, the United Nations convened a High-Level Meeting on AMR, reinforcing global resolve in combating this escalating threat.

I was privileged to work alongside world leaders, including Dame Sally Davies, in shaping these discussions, which resulted in significant commitments: the establishment of an independent external evaluation body, the setting of ambitious reduction targets—such as decreasing AMR-related mortality by 10%—and a clear directive to move *from declaration to action*.

Today, we stand at a crucial juncture where implementation is paramount, and we must hold ourselves accountable to ensure these commitments translate into real-world impact.

Despite increasing global consensus, national progress remains uneven. Many countries have developed National Action Plans, yet critical gaps in financing and political prioritization persist. Without dedicated national funding, these plans remain aspirational rather than operational. This underscores the urgent need for stronger political will and strategic investment in AMR mitigation.

Among the most pressing priorities is the development of new antimicrobial agents. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the indispensable role of scientific innovation in safeguarding public health. The rapid development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines was instrumental in containing the crisis.

Yet, AMR research and development continue to lag. Without a robust pipeline of new antibiotics, we risk plunging into an era where minor infections become untreatable.

Why has progress in antibiotic development been so limited?

The root cause lies in a fundamental market failure. Unlike other pharmaceuticals, antibiotics are prescribed sparingly to prevent resistance, making them commercially unviable. Consequently, many pharmaceutical companies have withdrawn from antibiotic research, leading to a dangerously stagnant pipeline.

To reverse this trend, we must reimagine the economic landscape of antimicrobial development. We need innovative financial incentives and sustainable investment mechanisms that encourage both industry engagement and the recruitment of world-class scientific talent. Yet, this is not merely a scientific or economic issue—it is a complex interplay of regulatory, political, and societal factors that must be addressed holistically.

This is precisely why the AMR Policy Fellowship was established. This program represents a joint commitment by the UK and Japan to cultivate the next generation of AMR leaders—scientists, policymakers, and industry experts who will work collaboratively to devise and implement innovative solutions.

I have the utmost confidence that the fellows trained through this initiative will play a pivotal role in shaping global AMR strategies, bridging the gap between research, policy, and public health. Their contributions will not only drive scientific breakthroughs but will also inform evidence-based decision-making at the highest levels of governance.

As we navigate an increasingly uncertain global landscape, partnerships like the one between the UK and Japan are more critical than ever. Through collaboration, we can develop bold, forward-thinking strategies, accelerate policy implementation, and set a precedent for the rest of the world.

I firmly believe that the innovations and policies emerging from this partnership will serve as a model for other nations, influencing AMR strategies on a global scale.

Ladies and gentlemen, the future of AMR action rests in our hands. It depends on our collective resolve, our commitment to fostering innovation, and our ability to translate policy into practice. The decisions we make today will shape the health security of generations to come.

Let us seize this opportunity with conviction, ensuring that our shared vision for a world resilient to AMR becomes a reality.

I look forward to continuing this journey alongside each of you, confident that together, we can build a healthier, more resilient world.

Thank you very much.