**Critical priority pathogens continue to pose threat: WHO**

Critical priority pathogens present major global threats due to their high burden, and ability to resist treatment and spread resistance to other bacteria, noted the latest Bacterial Pathogens Priority List (BPPL) updated by the World Health Organization (WHO). This includes gram-negative bacteria resistant to last-resort antibiotics, and Mycobacterium tuberculosis resistant to the antibiotic Rifampicin. The list features 15 families of antibiotic-resistant bacteria grouped into critical, high, and medium categories for prioritisation.

Seven years since it published the last such list, the WHO stated that high-priority pathogens, including salmonella and shigella, are of particularly high burden in low- and middle-income countries, along with Pseudomonas aeruginosa and Staphylococcus aureus, which pose significant challenges in healthcare settings. Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites no longer respond to medicines, increasing the risk of disease spread, illness and deaths. “AMR is driven in large part by the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials,’’ the document says.

Other high-priority pathogens such as antibiotic-resistant Neisseria gonorrhoeae and Enterococcus faecium, present unique public health challenges, including persistent infections and resistance to multiple antibiotics, necessitating targeted research and public health interventions.

“By mapping the global burden of drug-resistant bacteria and assessing their impact on public health, this list is key to guiding investment and for grappling with the antibiotics pipeline and access crisis. Since the first Bacterial Priority Pathogens List was released in 2017, the threat of antimicrobial resistance has intensified, eroding the efficacy of numerous antibiotics and putting many of the gains of modern medicine at risk,” Yukiko Nakatani, the WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Antimicrobial Resistance ad interim, said.