



Aggressive tactics to stop the spread of pathogens such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* will benefit from a united front in terminology.

intestines alone, and most of these help us to stay in good health.

War and threat were once potent rallying calls. But a more nuanced, balanced, standardized vocabulary is now needed — one that takes ecological balance into account.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

Because terminology has geographic, disciplinary and societal variations that affect understanding and interpretation, a programme of research is needed to optimize the lexicon across different countries and languages. Such a programme could be undertaken within the current WHO global action plan objective 1 — to improve awareness and understanding of drug resistance through effective communication, education and training.

Such a research programme could identify the terms used globally and establish whether the direct translation of English words into other languages renders them useful. The term drug-resistant infection is not used in France, for instance, nor is the translation of antimicrobial resistance — *résistance aux antimicrobiens*. Rather, *antibiorésistance*, a contraction for antibiotic resistance, is preferred. It could also explore how such phrases are interpreted by people from different walks of life, assess the impact of different language on understanding and on rates of infection, build a global consensus around the scientific terminology

of drug resistance and integrate these terms into global education programmes and communication strategies.

William Shakespeare was the master of multiple meaning. Juliet's "What's in a name ..." muse about her Romeo riffs on the arbitrary, insubstantial nature of labels. But, given the gravity of what's ahead, now is the time consider the power of words to change the course of events. It is a lesson that those of us trying to broadcast an understanding of this crisis should heed. ■

Marc Mendelson is professor of infectious diseases and head of the Division of Infectious Diseases & HIV Medicine at Groote Schuur Hospital, University of Cape Town, South Africa. **Manica Balasegaram** is director of the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership, Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative, Geneva, Switzerland. **Tim Jinks** is head of the Drug-Resistant Infections Program at the Wellcome Trust, London, UK. **Céline Pulcini** is professor of infectious diseases at Nancy University Hospital and leads a research team on stewardship at the University of Lorraine (EA 4360 APEMAC) in Nancy, France. **Mike Sharland** is professor of paediatric infectious diseases at the Institute of Infection and Immunity, St Georges Hospital, University of London, UK. e-mail: marc.mendelson@uct.ac.za

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CORRECTION

The print version of the Comment 'Five hacks for digital democracy' (B. S. Noveck *Nature* **544**, 287–289; 2017) failed to note that the author declared competing financial interests. See go.nature.com/2ocprj6 for the statement.