# International Rational Use of Medicines Day 2025

# THE FACTS

1. The World Health Organization (WHO) and other international bodies emphasize rational use of medicines as a cornerstone of global health strategies, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a critical support for universal health coverage and reducing preventable diseases. ( World Health Organization 2015)
2. Medicines account for [20–60% of health spending](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/median-consumer-price-ratio-of-selected-generic-medicines---public) in developing countries, with up to 90% of the population purchasing medicines through out-of-pocket payments, making medicines the largest family expenditure item after food. This means medicines are a major expense for individuals and countries. It is essential that we achieve good value for this spend. Rational Use of Medicines ensures this.
3. More than $500 billion USD can be saved annually through more appropriate use of medicines worldwide (IMS 2012)
4. Medication-related harm is too common in all health care settings globally. Preventable harm attributed to medicine use was found in 7% of patients from LMICs and 4% of patients in HICs. The highest rates were found in Africa and South-East Asia at 9%. (WHO 2024)
5. A quarter is preventable medication related harm is severe or potentially life threatening.
6. Common problems are: inappropriate use of antimicrobials leading to antimicrobial resistance, sub-optimal use of generic medicines, mismanagement of multiple medicines, delayed or underused medicines for chronic conditions, patients not taking medicines as intended.
7. Older patients are at the greater risk of medication harms and are the patients most likely to be prescribed the most medicines.
8. Medicines that contribute most to medication related harm: Antibacterials, antipsychotics, cardiovascular medications, drugs for functional gastrointestinal disorders, endocrine therapy, hypnotics, sedatives and non-steroidal anti inflammatories.
9. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the top global public health and development threats. It is estimated that bacterial AMR was directly responsible for 1.27 million global deaths in 2019 and contributed to 4.95 million deaths (WHO 2025)
10. In addition to death and disability, AMR has significant economic costs. The World Bank estimates that AMR could result in US$ 1 trillion additional healthcare costs by 2050, and US$ 1 trillion to US$ 3.4 trillion gross domestic product (GDP) losses per year by 2030 (WHO 2025)
11. In the USA alone, CDC and experts at the University of Utah School of Medicine have estimated that treating antimicrobial resistance (AR) threats contribute to more than $4.6 billion in healthcare costs annually. (WHO 2024)
12. Rational use includes educating patients about the proper use of medicines, such as the importance of completing a prescribed course or adhering to dosage instructions. Empowering patients with knowledge leads to better medication adherence and a stronger understanding of how to manage their health, which directly benefits public health. (WHO 2017)