

# **Afghanistan's Silent Epidemic: The Public Health Crisis of Antibiotic Misuse, based on 2025 study by Masudi, Rahimi & Shayan**

While much of Afghanistan's public health discourse centers around malnutrition, and maternal mortality, a subtler yet profoundly dangerous crisis is unfolding: the systemic misuse and overuse of antibiotics. According to this research: • Over 85% of hospital inpatients receive antibiotics, often empirically, without diagnostic confirmation. • In both urban and rural settings, antibiotics are widely accessible without prescription, including through unregulated vendors and undertrained pharmacists. • A cultural perception persists that antibiotics act as general "body cleansers," leading to widespread self-medication and patient demand. • The result is a growing wave of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). For example, over 51% of *E. coli* infections in one Kabul hospital study were resistant to commonly used drugs — far above global averages. The study also highlights: • A lack of national AMR surveillance systems. • Minimal antimicrobial stewardship training among medical staff. • The absence of widespread diagnostic tools like CRP tests, which could reduce unnecessary prescriptions. If left unaddressed, this silent epidemic could undermine basic therapeutic capabilities across Afghanistan, jeopardizing future treatment outcomes and threatening regional health security. Discussion Questions: • What institutional reforms are required to regulate antibiotic use? • How can public health education campaigns address cultural beliefs around medication? • What role can academic institutions play in building evidence-based responses to AMR? We invite you to contribute insights, reflections, or comparative case studies from other countries facing similar challenges.

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