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Yearly report of the president

Dear Members of the Round Table Antibiotics

The COVID19 pandemic dominated 2021 and had an impact on the activities of the Round Table Antibiotics. Nevertheless, we have achieved great progress in 2021 and laid the foundations for our parliamentary activities in 2022, which had their origin in the Call for Action from 2020 and the Appeal to the Federal Council from 2017.

The Call for Action launched at the end of 2020 led to a motion by National Councillor Doris Fiala calling for “antibiotics research to be improved through pull incentives” as well as a motion by National Councillor Patricia von Falkenstein on “generating incentives to develop new antibiotics in Switzerland and bring them to market”. In response to the parliamentary interest, we worked with National Councillor Brigitte Crottaz and Marc Gitzinger (BioVersys & BEAM Alliance) to find ways of informing parliamentarians about the issue. At the end of the discussions, a non-partisan information event was organised by Councillor of States Maya Graf, National Councillors Brigitte Crottaz, Patricia von Falkenstein, Michel Matter, and Benjamin Roudit. At the event, which was moderated by me on behalf of the Round Table Antibiotics, Christoph Dehio (Director NCCR Antiresist), Marc Gitzinger, Barbara Polek (Round Table Antibiotics) and Dr Manica Balasegaram (GARDP) showed how Swiss universities, SMEs, the Parliament and international organisations can contribute to pandemic preparedness. Key points discussed were the importance of push and pull incentives to maintain the long-term performance of the Swiss healthcare system, to become a driver for research and development in the field of antibiotics, and to fulfil an international obligation. In addition to receiving excellent questions from the parliament, we also heard a commitment from the parliamentarians to continue to work on the issue.

The Round Table Antibiotics was active both in communication and in the working groups. As a representative of the Round Table, I discussed the topic of "Connecting Politics, Industry and Academia" at the conference "Promoting Innovative Antibiotic

R&D in Switzerland" organised by the NCCR Antiresist and the SNF72. I also moderated a webinar with Prof. Dr. Adrian Egli and Dr. Julia Bielicki on the topic of "Challenges of Antimicrobial Resistance". However, the highlight in 2021 was certainly the keynote speech by Prof. Dr Thomas Zeltner on the question of how the supply of effective antibiotics can be ensured in Switzerland.

The Working Group 1 - Financial Models met monthly to develop a common vision. The group, led by Chantal Morel and myself, developed the vision "We help design pull-incentives that encourage antibiotics development in a sustainable manner". As specific objectives, the group wants to develop and pilot a Swiss pull-incentive, drawing on international initiatives and expertise, taking into account Swiss clinical development capabilities and Swiss flexibility to test novel trial designs and optimise regulatory pathways. Furthermore, Working Group 1 wants to act as an advisory body for the authorities and parliament in Switzerland.

Working Group 2 - Security of Supply has also met several times and initiated a strategy workshop, which took place in April 2022. In the strategy workshop chaired by Lukas Bruhin, we discussed the environment as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the Round Table Antibiotics (SWOT). We sharpened the vision of the RTA: as an independent think tank with acknowledged and well interlinked experts in the public-private domain, we want to raise awareness among decision-makers of the consequences of a lack of antibiotics, develop and pursue our own programme focused on Switzerland in the area of remuneration incentives, and provide advice to the administration and politicians with our network. We identified the need to establish an executive director and to pursue a concrete project in the area of incentive schemes. The findings of the workshop will certainly accompany us in the following years and potentially also serve as a model approach on an international level.

For communication purposes, the Round Table Antibiotics mainly used LinkedIn that was mainly organized by Marc Creus. His activities enabled the Round Table Antibiotics to strongly increase the number of followers on LinkedIn and reach a worldwide network from politics, academia and industry with its content. In addition, the Round Table Antibiotics provides substantial information on the website that is managed by Jean-Claude Piffaretti. It is always worth the time visiting www.roundtableantibiotics.ch.

I would like to thank you all for your commitment and support. In particular, I would like to thank Jean-Claude Piffaretti, who has been doing a fantastic job from the very beginning. With our regret, he is stepping down from his position as secretary this year and will become an ordinary member of the Round Table Antibiotics.



Rudolf Blankart
President of the Round Table Antibiotics
