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Angels and demons: Microbes or man?

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Microbes have been here for millions of years; we have not. We need them for a variety of purposes; they do not need us. We have systematically destroyed the environment to our cost affording microbes new opportunities which they have grasped enthusiastically. For survival and natural selection microbes have been producing antibiotics for millennia whereas we only entered this domain in the 1930's and in order to survive we have developed more antimicrobials. Based on their natural selection potential it is therefore not surprising that microbes have developed resistance. The global impact of antibiotic resistance is potentially more devastating than any war imaginable and if unchecked we are on the recessive road to the pre-antibiotic era. But resistance has another meaning – "Refusal to accept or comply" and that is most relevant with regard to the medical profession and indiscriminate antimicrobial use. There are therefore two battles we need to wage; one against the microbe, the other against the profession. Hence a multifactorial approach including behavioral strategies, regulation of antimicrobial use, education and pathogen surveillance are the last remaining lines of defense. The aphorism, "Keep your friends close and your enemies even closer" is relevant. We need to offer microbes few opportunities and coerce our colleagues; either that or brace ourselves for the coming plague. Perhaps the microbe is not the demon, but man.

Biography

Yogandree Ramsamy, MBCHB, is currently completing her Master's degree and Fellowship in Medical Microbiology at the University Of Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. She has had four publications and is a reviewer for three international journals on subjects pertaining to Antimicrobial Resistance and Stewardship and Surveillance.

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