



Antibiotics save lives, but more and more bacteria are becoming resistant to them. In Switzerland, too, there are people who, despite years of treatment, suffer from chronic infections or die from acute infections due to antibiotic resistance.

In some cases, treatment with phages could help. Phages are viruses that specifically target bacteria. Phage therapy is not authorised in Switzerland. Although it may be used in emergencies under strict rules, for various reasons this happens very rarely here – in contrast to some other countries, such as Belgium.

The [Phage Therapy Forum project](#) raises the following questions for discussion and convenes key stakeholders: The public, patients, health care professionals, regulators, and policy makers.

- 👤 Is there a need to provide better care for patients with untreatable bacterial infections – and what role might phage therapy play in this?
- 👤 Are measures needed to make phage therapy treatments more accessible in Switzerland?
- 👤 What challenges arise?

THE WAY FORWARD IS DISCUSSED IN SPECIAL EVENTS

- 👤 **When:** Four events in the first half of 2026
- 👤 **Where:** In Basel, Lenzburg, Zurich, and Lausanne
- 👤 **Who:** Anyone interested, experts, including infectious disease specialists, patients, and policymakers
- 👤 **Why:** Anyone interested can learn more about phage therapy and discuss with experts about possible solutions to better integrate phage therapy in Swiss healthcare

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

phagenforum.ch/en/home and
www.linkedin.com/company/forum-phagentherapie

WHO WE ARE

Researchers and lecturers from ETH Zurich, the Ludwig-Maximilian Universität München and the FHNW are involved in the project. It is funded by the Agora programme of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

FACTS ABOUT THE ANTI-BIOTICS RESISTANCE CRISIS

Antibiotics are among the most important drugs. Since their introduction in the 1940s, they have saved millions of lives. However, many types of bacteria develop resistant strains that are difficult – or even impossible – to treat. Those affected struggle with serious illness for years or even die. In Switzerland, around 300 people face this fate; in Europe, the figure is over 30,000.

A British expert report warns that, globally, 10 million people will die from resistant bacterial infections by 2050 – over seven times more than today – unless more is done to tackle the antibiotic resistance crisis.

Phages attached to a bacterium of the species *Streptococcus pyogenes*

AN ENGAGING INTRODUCTION INTO THE SUBJECT

A 25-minute film uses the example of José-Maria Vidal to illustrate the suffering of those affected and discusses the opportunities and limitations of phage therapy. Vidal suffers from a chronic lung infection as a result of a congenital condition.

The film «Phage Therapy – Medicine Goes Viral» was commissioned and funded by the Swiss Academy of Sciences.



José-Marie Vidal talks about the time before he was treated with phages.

FOCUS ON STUDENTS

A focus of the project is on workshops for schools (upper and lower secondary school): students can work alongside researchers in the laboratory to study phages and discuss societal issues related to antibiotic resistance and phage therapy. Workshop participants can contribute their knowledge and deepen their understanding at one of the forums.


More information: phagenforum.ch


CONTACT US


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The science journalist has co-initiated the [Phage Therapy Forum](#) project. He has authored two books on the subject.


UNTREATABLE INFECTIONS CAN AFFECT ANYONE


 For example, **people with diabetes** who develop **foot infections** («diabetic foot»). The bacteria responsible are often resistant to antibiotics.

 People with **artificial joints or other implants**. Despite precautions, infections can occur during surgery, which are often difficult to treat. Amputations may be a consequence.

 Many **cancer treatments and other modern medical therapies** weaken the immune system. This can lead to bacterial infections that are difficult to treat or even fatal.

 **Congenital conditions such as cystic fibrosis (CF)** can lead to chronic infections. Between 800 and 1,000 people in Switzerland live with CF.

 Some people suffer from **recurrent bladder infections or chronic sinusitis**, for which antibiotics are only partially effective.

 Studies show that **Swiss people returning from countries with serious antibiotic resistance problems bring resistant germs back home with them**. In the case of India, the figure was over 85 per cent. Often, the resistant bacteria disappear from a person's own microbial flora again. However, they can infect people with weakened immune systems.