

## Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

## Abstract

A moving short story portraying the invasiveness of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in U.S. nursing homes.

## Artist

Michelle Lara (2022)


## Caption

When antibiotics are administered, though most of the disease-causing bacteria dies, a few drug-resistant bacteria remain alive. They are then able to grow and take over because of the extra space. With their body now being resistant to antibiotics, patients are then confronted with fewer or no solutions to their bacterial infections. This phenomenon of bacteria defeating the drugs designed to kill them is referred to as antibiotic resistance.

Resistance has become more frequent because of the unnecessary use of antibiotics; up to 43% of antibiotic prescriptions in the U.S. do not need to be prescribed. To tackle antibiotic resistance, it would be productive for policy measures to target one of the most affected populations: nursing homes. These facilities are especially prone to overprescription as studies have shown that up to 75 percent of antibiotic prescriptions in nursing homes are not appropriately prescribed. Hence, older nursing home residents experience reduced quality of life, prolongation of the dying process, and unnecessary monetary costs due to overprescription, and the consequent antibiotic resistance.

## Artist Lens

This short story is intended to be a unique way of portraying the invasiveness of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, the disparity between rural vs. urban treatment in nursing care centers, and the sometimes lonely, though easy-to-positively-impact reality of nursing care facilities. Though not the most technical in nature, the short story is meant to engage the reader’s attention and emotions and be entertaining throughout. People can glean different messages from this: An average community member can see the impactful and meaningful work that volunteering can provide; physicians and hospital administrators can be mindful of instilling antibiotic stewardship programs in their work; and policy-makers, activists, government workers, etc. can better understand what the issue of antibiotic resistance means to a large percent of the U.S. population, and hopefully be motivated to respond. Overall, it could help spread awareness and potentially inspire action,



especially in conjunction with the increasing national discussion about this issue. To increase readership, I would love to publish something like this in population-specific magazines (one with high medical worker viewership) or online newspapers like the New Yorker that allow for short story submissions.

## Media

Original Short Story

[Read the Short Story: Antibiotic Resistance in Elderly People](#)