

WHO STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF MUSCAT DECLARATION ON PATIENT SAFETY

The 19TH Edition of the Arab Hospitals Federation Forum
29-30 April 2018, Muscat, Oman

Every year, millions of patients die or are injured because of unsafe and poor quality health care. Most of these deaths and injuries are avoidable.

Health care related adverse events are now estimated to be the 14th leading cause of death and injury globally. There are an estimated 421 million hospitalizations in the world every year, and on average, 1 in 10 of these results in some kind of adverse events. At least half of these adverse events can be prevented along with the associated financial and psychological consequences that are colossal and unaccounted for.

Results of a landmark study¹ conducted in six countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region to assess the prevalence of adverse events in low and middle income countries show that up to 18% of hospital admissions were associated with patient harm that was the result of healthcare itself. More importantly, these adverse events were associated with a high rate of serious harm resulting in death or permanent disability. There is a good reason to believe that the situation has not significantly improved. This is an unacceptable situation for all the stakeholders and require determined and sustained actions for patient safety.

At WHO, Universal Health Coverage is a top priority, built on the foundation of strong health systems ensuring that people can access people-centered health services that are safe, effective, affordable and of good quality, without facing financial hardship. This calls for paying more attention to quality and safety that should not be tackled as a side activity, rather a central concern in the move towards universal health coverage.

The perception by the population that health services are unsafe, results in many patients not using them. Thus, Universal Health Coverage cannot be achieved unless healthcare services are accessible, affordable, and safe.

¹ Patient safety in developing countries: retrospective estimation of scale and nature of harm to patients in hospital. *BMJ* 2012; 344:e832.

To improve safety, the below key principles need to be strictly followed in an integrated manner:

- ensuring bold leadership commitment, both at the national and health facility levels. A leadership that places safety culture at the apex of health care delivery;
- promoting evidence-based best practices for reducing unintended patient harm. These should include practices that relate to reporting and learning from errors;
- delivering care by competent and motivated healthcare professionals, in sufficient numbers;
- valuing patient/people-centred care as one of the foundations of patient safety through engagement with patients so that they become true partners and;
- using data to drive safety improvement.

In response to the heavy burden of unsafe care in our region, WHO is finding out the solutions that will promote effective and safer care and integrate the above mentioned interventions. The flagship for patient safety work in the region is the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative². This is an initiative taken by WHO in the Region and aimed at enhancing the visibility and implementation of patient safety practices in health care facilities. An important tool for this initiative is a set of evidence based standards that specifically target patient safety. The initiative provides a framework through which health care facilities can deliver safer patient care. It assesses health care facilities from a patient safety perspective; builds the capacity of staff, and involves patients in improving health outcomes.

We acknowledge the commendable efforts and the great political commitment at the highest levels that have led to the expansion of the Patient Safety Friendly hospital initiative in the Sultanate of Oman. Indeed, the initiative is now covering 26 hospitals from the public and the private sectors, showing a great good practice model for other countries to follow. Few other countries from the region are also making notable progress towards the expansion of Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative. We encourage the remaining countries to take advantage of the experiences in the Region for successful implementation of the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital initiative.

WHO is committed to the safety of every patient, by working with countries to implement patient safety systems, processes and practices for ensuring safer care. We share the same vision: that no lives are harmed or lost during the provision of health care.

Thank you so much.

² <http://www.emro.who.int/patient-safety/about/>