



WORLD ALLIANCE FOR PATIENT SAFETY

Launch

27 October 2004

Washington, DC, United States of America

Background

There is growing international acceptance that more attention and resources to improve patient safety are vital to enhancing health system performance in terms of safety of care. Patient safety is perceived as a critical component of quality which is in turn set in the broader context of health service provision. Though cost effective strategies and tools exist for addressing patient safety challenges, a diverse range of system constraints and lack of resources in many countries result in an ever increasing incidence of cases of adverse events in health care.

The facts are alarming: the 1999 Institute of Medicine report estimated that in the United States of America medical error is reported to cause as many as 98 000 hospital deaths each year – more than car accidents, breast cancer or AIDS. Various studies have shown that: in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland around 10% of hospital patients suffer adverse events annually; in Europe, every tenth hospital patient suffers from preventable harm; in New Zealand and Canada the rates of adverse events are around 10%; and in Australia, an adverse-event rate of 16.6% was found in hospital patients. The situation is far more serious in developing countries, although there is less data, with millions of child and adult patients enduring prolonged ill-health, disability and death caused by unsafe vaccinations, injections and blood, counterfeit and substandard drugs, unreliable equipment and practices, inadequate infection control, and overall poor health services and environments. The economic consequences of adverse effects are staggering with costs as high as US\$ 29 billion a year in the USA, and about US\$ 6 billion a year in the United Kingdom, in addition to potential liabilities estimated at US\$ 4.3 billion.

Status of activities

The Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly (2002) in resolution WHA55.18 on patient safety called upon Member States to pay the closest possible attention to the problem of patients safety and to establish and strengthen science-based systems necessary for improving patients' safety and quality of health care, including the monitoring of drugs, medical equipment and technology. The resolution urged WHO to develop global norms and standards; promote evidence-based policies and mechanisms to recognize excellence in patient safety, encourage research and support efforts by Member States in developing patient safety policy and practice. It has also ensured that the drive for safer health care is now becoming a worldwide endeavour that can bring significant benefits to patients in countries rich and poor, developed and developing, in all corners of the globe.

Several countries have now initiated efforts to tackle patient safety issues. The Fifty-seventh World Health Assembly held in 2004 agreed that a World Alliance would be a significant step in the struggle to improve the safety of health care in all Member States. It recognized that, at present, no single player has the expertise, funding or research and delivery capabilities to tackle the full range of patient safety issues on a worldwide scale. A World Alliance for Patient Safety would provide a mechanism to build capacity, decrease duplication of investment and activities and benefit by economies of scale. Such an alliance would also provide an environment in which major new initiatives could arise to help catalyse a large-scale and more sustainable response.

In close cooperation with the Department of Health of the United Kingdom, and partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services of the USA, and other government agencies worldwide, WHO will launch the World Alliance for Patient Safety in Washington, DC, 27 October 2004.



World Health Organization, Geneva, 2004

Department of Health System Policies and Operations, Evidence and Information for Policy Cluster

Objective

The launch of the World Alliance for Patient Safety aims to sustain political momentum and strengthen commitment of interested countries, current and potential agencies, and many other partners on the critical role of safety in care.

It is envisaged that the launch will bring together ministers of health and senior representatives from several countries. The meeting will encourage participants to strengthen common action for integration of patient safety issues in national health policy and practice that will eventually lead to much greater long-term safety in health care. Technical progress made at regional level will be highlighted and the launch will be organized around a series of keynote speeches.

The World Alliance for Patient Safety aims to cover six major action areas: a key element will be the **Global Patient Safety Challenge**, focusing over an initial two-year cycle on the challenge of health-care associated infection; **Patients for Patient Safety** involving patient organizations and individuals in Alliance work; **Taxonomy for Patient Safety** ensuring consistency in the concepts, principles, norms and terminology used in patient safety work; **Research for Patient Safety** developing a rapid assessment tool for use in developing countries and undertaking prevalence studies of adverse effects; **Solutions for Patient Safety** promoting existing interventions in patient safety and coordinating international efforts to develop solutions; and **Reporting and Learning** generating best practice guidelines for existing and new reporting systems.

Participants

The launch will bring together around 100 participants representing interested parties at the highest level. This includes senior government officials, representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, senior scientists and representatives from academic and medical institutions, and representatives from WHO departments. The Director-General of WHO, Dr LEE Jong-wook, will launch the Alliance followed by keynote speeches by the Chair of the Alliance and Chief Medical Officer of the United Kingdom Department of Health, Sir Liam Donaldson, Dr C. Clancy, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Department of Health and Human Services, United States of America, and the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for the Americas, Dr Mirta Roses, will host the event. The Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Africa, Dr Ebrahim Samba, will participate in the event, and the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Europe, Dr Mark Danzon will be linked through videoconferencing. A recorded message from the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, Dr Shigeru Omi will be delivered.

Venue : Pan American Health Organization Building, 525, 23rd Street N.W., Washington, DC 2003, USA.

Programme, 27 October 2004

9:30 A.M.	Coffee
10:00	Welcome by Dr M. Roses, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for the Americas and Director of the Pan American Health Organization
10:10	Launch of the World Alliance for Patient Safety by Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General, World Health Organization
10.15	Keynote address by Sir Liam Donaldson, Chair of the Alliance and Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, United Kingdom
10:35	Keynote address by Dr C. Clancy, Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Department of Health and Human Services, United States of America
10:50	Speech by Susan Sheridan, Vice President, Consumers Advancing Patient Safety
11:10	Keynote address by Dr Ebrahim Samba, Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Africa
11:20	Video-link keynote address by Dr Marc Danzon, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for Europe
11:25	Keynote address by Dr Shigeru Omi, Regional Director, WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific
11:30	Questions and Answers
12:00	Close - Luncheon buffet