



World Health Organization

Commitment to patient safety worldwide has grown since the late 1990s. This was prompted by two influential reports: *To Err is Human*, produced by the Institute of Medicine in the USA, in 1999 and *An Organization with a Memory*, produced by the United Kingdom Government's Chief Medical Officer in 2000. Both reports recognized that error is routine during the delivery of health care and occurs in around 10% of hospital admissions. In a proportion of cases, the harm produced is serious, even fatal.

Since the publication of these two influential reports, the quest to improve the safety of care for patients has become a global movement. This has led to a remarkable transformation in the way that patient safety is viewed. Having begun as a subject of minority academic interest, it is now a firm priority for most health-care systems.

Yet, the current state of patient safety worldwide is still a source of deep concern. As data on the scale and nature of errors and adverse events have been more widely gathered, it has become apparent that unsafe care is a feature of virtually every aspect of health care.

The education and training of dentists, doctors, midwives, nurses, pharmacists and other health-care professionals has long been the foundation of safe, high quality health care. Yet, it has been under-used and under-valued as a vital tool for addressing the challenges of achieving improved patient safety. It is clear that a new approach is needed if education and training are to play the full role that they should in improving patient safety.

For the past three years, the World Health Organization has been exploring the links between education and health practice – between the education of the health-care workforce and the safety of the health system. As an outcome, it has developed this multi-professional Patient Safety Curriculum Guide, which addresses a variety of ideas and methods for teaching and assessing patient safety more effectively.

The WHO Curriculum Guide is a comprehensive programme for effective student learning about patient safety. It highlights the key risks of health care and how to manage them, shows how to recognize adverse events and hazards, report and analyse them. It teaches about team-work and the importance of clear communication across all levels of health care, whilst emphasizing the importance of engaging with patients and carers to build and sustain a culture of patient safety.

I hope this Curriculum Guide will inspire the future generation of health-care professionals to embark on a lifelong quest to provide their patients with the best quality and safest care they deserve.

Sir Liam Donaldson

Envoy for Patient Safety
World Health Organization