

Regional Patient Safety Workshop on “Clean Care is Safe Care”
20-22 June 2007, Bangkok, Thailand

Regional Director’s Inaugural Speech

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen:

I am very pleased to extend a warm welcome to all of you to Bangkok and to the Regional Patient Safety Workshop on “Clean Care is Safe Care”. Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, the Regional Director of the World Health Organization’s South-East Asia Region, is not able to be with us today due to prior commitments. It is a great pleasure for me to deliver his speech. I quote:

The subject of patient safety was discussed at the 59th Session of the Regional Committee for South-East Asia in Dhaka in August 2006 and culminated in the adoption of Resolution RC59/R3 on “Promoting Patient Safety in Health Care”. The resolution calls for Member States “to promote interventions that have been shown to improve patient safety” and calls on the World Health Organization (WHO) to “ensure capacity building in different aspects of patient safety” and “to facilitate collaboration and exchange of information and best practices” in the Region.

Prevention of health care-associated infections was identified as a priority area of work by participants at the first WHO Regional Workshop on Patient Safety, held in New Delhi, India, in July 2006, predating the Resolution. Participants recommended that WHO take steps to:

- Establish a network for sharing information and best practices on prevention of health care-associated infection;
- Establish training programmes on the prevention of health care-associated infection;
- Provide technical assistance to countries when required on specific issues, and
- Disseminate applicable standards and protocols on the prevention of health care-associated infection.

This workshop, the second in the Region, is in response to these recommendations and constitutes an important step in the fulfillment of Resolution SEA/RC59/R3.

Health care-associated infections are not new, but are a growing problem in the Region. They are linked to failures in health-care systems and processes as well as to behavioural practices of health-care workers, patients and the public at large. The tools and interventions to tackle these infections already exist but they are not widely implemented.

This workshop brings together policy-makers, managers responsible for quality and safety of health care in their institutions, and representatives of consumer and media organizations, to build regional commitment and capacity to address this problem.

Over the years, WHO has worked closely with Member States in the Region to improve safety in areas such as blood products and their use, injection practices and immunization, safe water, sanitation and waste management, and clinical procedures. This Workshop brings together existing WHO strategies that reduce the risks that come with health care-associated infections in these inter-related areas.

This workshop will provide a valuable opportunity to:

- Review the status of health care-associated infections in our Region;
- Exchange information on the strategies and tools available to reduce these infections in our respective countries, and,
- Outline a set of action points that we can adopt as part of an integrated strategy to reduce health care-associated infections in our respective countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This morning you attended Thailand's national launch of the first Global Patient Safety Challenge with the theme "Clean Care is Safer Care" during which the Ministry of Health signed a pledge stating its commitment to prevent health care-associated infections and improve the quality and safety of health care in the country. Other countries in our Region have also signed this pledge: India in July 2006, Bangladesh in September 2006, and Bhutan in December 2006. Others, such as Indonesia, have committed to do so later this year. It is my hope that all of you will commit to this pledge and return to your respective countries equipped with the expertise necessary to make "Clean Care is Safer Care" a reality.

I express my deep appreciation for your contribution to promote patient safety in the Region. I wish you all a productive meeting and a pleasant stay in Bangkok.

Thank you.