



**Joint Commission**  
on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations  
*Setting the Standard for Quality in Health Care*



**World Health  
Organization**



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# NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PARTNERS WITH  
JOINT COMMISSION AND JOINT COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL  
TO ELIMINATE MEDICAL ERRORS WORLDWIDE**

*Collaboration signifies urgent need for patient safety solutions to address serious global issue*

(OAKBROOK TERRACE, Ill. – August 23, 2005) Recognizing that health care errors seriously harm one in every 10 patients around the world, the World Health Organization (WHO) is designating the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations and Joint Commission International (JCI) as the world’s first WHO Collaborating Centre dedicated solely to patient safety. This action is aimed at reducing the unacceptably high numbers of serious medical injuries around the world each day.

“The most important knowledge in the field of patient safety is how to prevent harm from happening to patients during treatment and care,” says Sir Liam Donaldson, M.D., Chair of the World Alliance for Patient Safety, who is in Washington, D.C., today to launch the Centre. “The belief that one day it may be possible for the clinical error suffered by a patient in one part of the world to be a source of transmitted learning that benefits future patients in many countries is a

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powerful force behind the work of the Collaborating Centre and the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety,” says Sir Liam.

“Together, we can measurably strengthen and improve patient safety worldwide by spreading proven practices without regard to borders or other barriers that frequently exist in the international arena,” says Dennis S. O’Leary, M.D., President, Joint Commission. “This partnership should truly make a difference in improving the safety and, thereby, the quality of health care for people throughout the world.”

The collaboration among the Joint Commission, JCI and WHO will focus worldwide attention on patient safety and best practices that can reduce safety risks to patients, and coordinate international efforts to spread these solutions as broadly as possible. This will be accomplished by collaborating internationally with ministries of health, patient safety experts, national agencies on patient safety, health care professional associations, and consumer organizations.

“Patient safety has made significant strides in some parts of the world during the past 10 years, thanks to a willingness to acknowledge that adverse events occur in health care and that a systematic approach must be employed to reduce the very real risk of patient harm,” says Karen Timmons, CEO, JCI. “This collaboration among WHO, JCI and the Joint Commission offers new opportunities to identify and disseminate proven patient safety solutions, as well as to design and share innovative solutions to challenging patient safety issues facing health care organizations and practitioners in all countries.”

The Joint Commission International Center for Patient Safety, which was launched earlier this year by the Joint Commission and JCI, will operationalize this effort by forging partnerships with leaders in both developing and developed countries to identify health care safety needs and match these with proven solutions and best practices.

“Patient safety is a worldwide problem affecting countries both rich and poor,” says Mirta Roses, M.D., Regional Director, WHO Office for the Americas, who is participating in the launch of the Centre. “The Collaborating Centre will help to ensure that all countries can benefit from international work on solutions to patient safety problems.”

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The **World Health Organization (WHO)** is the United Nations specialized agency for health. It was established on 7 April 1948. WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health is defined in WHO's Constitution as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The Director General of WHO Dr LEE Jong Wook launched the World Alliance for Patient Safety in October 2004 to foster international collaboration and action on patient safety. The Alliance is chaired by Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief medical Officer of the United Kingdom. The Alliance has published a forward plan for 2005 covering six major action areas:

- **Global Patient Safety Challenge**, focusing over 2005-2006 on the challenge of health-care associated infection entitled "Clean care is safer care";
- **Patients for Patient Safety**, mobilizing patients and patient organizations to become involved in patient safety efforts worldwide;
- **Taxonomy for Patient Safety**, developing internationally acceptable data standards for collecting, coding and classifying adverse events and near misses;
- **Research for Patient Safety**, improving tools and methods to measure patient harm in developing countries and defining a global patient safety research agenda;
- **Solutions for Patient Safety**, spreading proven patient safety interventions worldwide and coordinating international efforts on future solutions;
- **Reporting and Learning** generating tools and guidance for developing patient safety reporting systems and improving existing systems within countries.

Further information on the work of the Alliance is available at [www.who.int/patientsafety](http://www.who.int/patientsafety)

Founded in 1951, the **Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations** seeks to continuously improve the safety and quality of care provided to the public through the provision of health care accreditation and related services that support performance improvement in health care organizations. The Joint Commission evaluates and accredits more than 15,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States, including more than 8,200 hospitals and home care organizations, and more than 6,800 other health care organizations that provide long term care, assisted living, behavioral health care, laboratory and ambulatory care services. The Joint Commission also accredits health plans, integrated delivery networks, and other managed care entities. In addition, the Joint Commission provides certification of disease-specific care programs, primary stroke centers, and health care staffing services. An independent, not-for-profit organization, the Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care. Learn more about the Joint Commission at [www.jcaho.org](http://www.jcaho.org).

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