LAUNCH EVENT
SECOND GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY CHALLENGE
SAFE SURGERY SAVES LIVES
25 JUNE 2008
WASHINGTON, DC, U.S.A

On June 25, 2008, the World Health Organization’s Safe Surgery Saves Lives initiative will be formally launched at a major event to be held at the WHO Regional Office for the Americas (AMRO/PAHO) in Washington DC, USA. This event will be hosted by Dr Mirta Roses Periago, WHO Regional Director for the Americas and attended by several Ministers of Health, world experts in surgery, anaesthesiology, nursing and leading representatives of healthcare associations. The event will video-link with numerous professional associations around the world. The date for the event will be announced in late February 2008.

Keynote speakers will include Dr Atul Gawande, leader of the Safe Surgery Saves Lives project, Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer for England and Chair of the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety, as well as representatives of organizations endorsing the concept of a "WHO Surgical Safety Checklist" as a tool for surgical teams around the world, to ensure that patients undergo the right operation at the correct body site, with safe anaesthesia, established infection prevention measures and effective teamwork for safer care.

The objectives of the Safe Surgery Saves Lives launch event are to:

- generate global awareness of the importance of this WHO initiative;
- publicize the "WHO Surgical Safety Checklist" as a means to ensuring safer care
- remind the world that concrete efforts for safer surgery will contribute to patient safety.

THE PROBLEM
Surgical care has been an essential component of health care worldwide for a century, but its recent, rapid growth is now having major public health consequences. Annually, an estimated 230 million major operations are performed around the world—one for every 25 human beings on earth. There are almost twice as many operations done globally as child deliveries, and at far higher risk than child birth. Major complication rates range from 3-16%, and death rates from 0.2-10%, depending on the setting, translating into at least 7 million disabling complications and 1 million deaths each year. At least half of these are recognized to be avoidable, if basic standards of care were more consistently followed in developed and developing countries.

THE RESPONSE:
The new Safe Surgery Saves Lives initiative provides strategies and tools for reducing the rising incidence of deaths and complications from surgery worldwide which involve:

1. Engaging professional endorsement for safer surgical care
2. Establishing a "WHO Surgical Safety Checklist"
3. Defining measures for better tracking of surgical volume and mortality.

At the launch event, the Alliance will announce the endorsements received from professional associations and societies supporting the "WHO Surgical Safety Checklist". No regional or country launch events are anticipated to take place during the implementation period of this initiative and professional society endorsements will be publicized through the Safe Surgery Saves Lives website.

For more information on Safe Surgery Saves Lives please visit:
http://www.who.int/patientsafety/challenge SAFE SURGERY SAVES LIVES/index.html