



**Working Groups Meeting**  
**WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge**  
**on Medication Safety**  
**22-24 August 2016, WHO-HQ, Geneva**

**Concept Note**

**Background**

Unsafe medication practices and medication errors are a leading cause of injury and health care associated harm around the world. In the United States alone, it is estimated that as many as 1.5 million patients are harmed and thousands are killed every year as a result of a medication safety issue. Statistics in low- and middle-income countries are limited and vary widely, indicating that the true burden of unsafe medication practices is grossly underestimated. Worldwide, the cost associated with medication errors has been estimated as 42 billion USD annually, which is almost 1% of total global health expenditure.

**WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety**

In order to address the global problem of unsafe medication practices and medication errors, WHO plans to launch the Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety with the overall goal of reducing harm from medications by targeting high-risk medications, polypharmacy and transitions of care. The Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety will create a framework and propose solutions to obstacles preventing safe medication practices.

The Challenge will be overseen by a Steering Board and governed by the Challenge Chair, Sir Liam Donaldson, WHO Patient Safety Envoy. There are five Working Groups: Patients and Public, Medicines, Health Professionals, Systems and Practices of Medications, and Monitoring and Evaluation. Working Groups participants include global leaders and experts in patient safety and medication safety. The Steering Board will define the strategic direction of the Challenge and determine how to construct the Challenge Framework in order to achieve the Challenge goals and objectives.

**WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety objectives**

1. Analyze the global baseline of medication errors and strengthen the global monitoring system to facilitate the tracking of medication errors
2. Develop a multi-modal strategy to engage governments, organizations and front-line health care providers to improve medication safety by developing a framework to target the medication use system to improve prescribing, transcription, preparation, dispensing, administration and monitoring practices.
3. Develop guidelines, tools, materials and technologies to promote and support, in

particular for flagship elements of high-risk medications, polypharmacy and transitions of care.

4. Engage key stakeholders, partners and industry to actively pursue efforts to improve medication safety.

### **Working Groups Meeting**

WHO will be engaging key international and national partners in substantive discussions at all stages of the development of the Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety. The Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Unit in the Service Delivery and Safety Department, in collaboration with the Essential Medicines and Health Products Department is organizing the Working Groups Meeting for the Global Patient Safety Challenge - Medication Safety on 22-24 August 2016 at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Working Groups Meeting will bring together 45-50 participants to create a cohesive Challenge vision, timeline and action plan. The Working Groups Meeting is the one of the main components of the Framework development phase and will provide the foundation for resource mobilization and the implementation phase.

### **Specific objectives of the Working Groups Meeting**

1. Evaluate the scope and aspects of harm related to medication safety that are generated through the relationship with patients and the public, health professionals, systems and practices for prescribing, preparing, dispensing and administering medications.
2. Review evidence, experience and best practices in reducing risks from medications and improving medication safety within the scope of work of the five Working Groups.
3. Identify the key terms that are commonly used in the field of medication safety and provide agreed definitions of each; and identify and outline tools, materials and technologies to be produced by each Working Group.
4. Map the key stakeholders globally and nationally that will be important within the scope of work of the Working Groups.
5. Put forward ideas for a five-year draft action plan and timeline.
6. Develop a communication plan for coordination between Working Groups and identify roles and responsibilities within the scope of the Working Groups.
7. Discuss development of global campaign, as well as mechanisms and opportunities to mobilize resources for implementation of proposed action plans.

### **Expected outcomes of the Working Groups Meeting**

1. Scope of harm related to medication safety evaluated
2. A draft action plan and timeline for launch and implementation with clarity of contributions for each Working Group developed.
3. Overview of materials and tools to be developed by each Working Group identified.
4. Collective understanding of how to maintain a cohesive Challenge focus.