

WHO Patient Safety Newsletter

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News in brief

In October, WHO Patient Safety and the WHO Department of Violence and Injury Prevention held a **Trauma Care Checklist International Consultation** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Based on a review of the literature on critical omissions during the initial resuscitation of trauma patients, all delegates agreed that a checklist has the potential to significantly decrease morbidity for victims who live and mortality for the over 2 million people whose death from injury could be prevented with improvements in trauma care. Next steps will involve further tool development in the field, with input from front-line practitioners. A formal pilot will start in the Spring, involving a number of the hospitals represented at the meeting.

A new **research curriculum for patient safety** is in production. It describes the foundations for capacity-building in patient safety research and contains a comprehensive list of competencies and learning objectives that can be taught either as a whole or on a per-topic basis. This guide is aimed at training and educating professionals in academic and training institutions, hospitals and professional organizations. It will be available in 2010.

In 2008, 223 applications were received and 20 projects from 17 countries were selected for funding as part of the **Patient Safety Research Small Grants**. 12 projects have already commenced. This year, 235 applications were received. The review process is in progress and the final outcomes are expected in February 2010.

Editorial

Sir Liam Donaldson - Chair, WHO Patient Safety



One issue has dominated health care globally over the past six months: H1N1 Influenza. The first influenza pandemic of the 21st century was announced by WHO in June this year. Since then, it has spread and caused illness in every WHO region. Despite a low mortality rate leading to fewer deaths than had been anticipated, there have been large numbers of affected patients requiring health care, both in hospital and in primary care.

The volume of patients presenting has increased the burden on health-care providers and, in some cases, threatened to overwhelm health services. This pressure has the potential to create conditions where patient safety is compromised as staff and services approach capacity. In order to guard against this, robust planning is required to ensure that efficient and effective systems are in place to deliver high quality, safe care despite the volume of cases presenting.

These systems, often complex in their design, can provide the platform

for staff to deliver care. What influenza in particular must remind us, however, is the need for individual staff to observe simple measures to keep their patients safe. WHO Patient Safety has developed the Influenza A (H1N1) Patient Care Checklist in conjunction with other WHO departments as part of the WHO response to the pandemic. The aim of this checklist is to help remind practitioners of key steps in the clinical management of suspected cases, in addition to important infection control measures. Hand hygiene for example, long championed by WHO Patient Safety through the first Global Patient Safety Challenge, is a cornerstone of infection control when managing influenza.

This pandemic is an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of organization-wide planning but also the need to educate, support and encourage individual staff to observe basic measures. When the issue of patient safety is addressed from both these perspectives simultaneously, it is possible to provide high quality, safe care despite extreme pressure on facilities.

APPS launched in Uganda

One of WHO Patient Safety's most exciting initiatives was launched in October at a workshop held in Kampala, Uganda. African Partnerships for Patient Safety (APPS) involves ten hospitals from Africa, England and Switzerland in its first wave and aims to improve patient safety in all partnering hospitals through a collaborative approach to learning and information sharing.

The Uganda workshop focused on partnership plans developed for implementation over the next two years and included discussions on technical support required in key areas of infection control, community engagement, communications and patient safety amplification. Participants were also able to trial a set of evaluation tools.

"The workshop was very timely for my community and my country. People have lost their sense of safety under the pretext of poverty. Hand washing does not need much."

Magdalene Wango,
Community Representative, Cameroon

Professor Didier Pittet, WHO Patient Safety Expert Lead for the First Global Patient Safety Challenge: *Clean Care is Safer Care* talked about the importance of reducing health care-associated infection through the use of hand hygiene at the point of patient care. Keynote addresses were also given by Dr Mbonye and Dr Amoni from the Ugandan Ministry of Health, Dr Saweka from the WHO Country Office and Fiona Carr on behalf of the National Patient Safety Agency (London), the coordinating organization for the English partners.

Setting milestones to advance safe patient care

Professor Didier Pittet - Expert Lead, First Global Patient Safety Challenge, *Clean Care is Safer Care*



On 5 May 2009, another milestone was established towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, with the launch of the first edition of the annual initiative "SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands". Organized by the WHO Patient Safety First Global Patient Safety Challenge, "Clean Care is Safer Care",

it attracted registrations of support from more than 5 000 health-care institutions by the launch date. It was an exciting and dynamic event, providing health-care workers in more than 124 countries throughout the world with a positive way of demonstrating commitment to best practice in hand hygiene by using the WHO recommendations and implementation strategies and tools.

Next year, on 5 May 2010, we will again highlight the importance of hand hygiene to reduce health care-associated infections with a global awareness-raising opportunity to double registrations to 10 000 and make 2010 a landmark event.

This commitment takes drive and enthusiasm from all parts of the globe. In Geneva, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Patient Safety (infection control and improving practices) will be working with WHO Patient Safety to develop three special events:

- Presentation of the results on 5 May 2010 of a 2-year pilot study in selected countries worldwide to promote hand hygiene best practice at the bedside. These will be of particular interest to facilities in all countries that would like to establish or continue with their own hand hygiene promotion programmes.
- Launch of a hand hygiene measurement activity using a simplified observation tool based on one of the "My Five Moments for Hand Hygiene". More details to be announced in upcoming newsletters, updates and on the website.
- Live webinars screened during the week of 5 May.

By raising public awareness of the importance of hand hygiene at the point of care, we are encouraging health-care workers and patients alike to be more vigilant about their care. WHO Patient Safety can provide the tools, the materials and the access to information and education, but it is always up to the hospitals, the health-care facilities and staff to take the next step.

Our energies have also focused on establishing a network of countries where hand hygiene programmes are already in place. In this way, ideas and lessons learned can be shared and areas highlighted where improvements can be made.

With H1N1 still an imminent threat to our public and health-care facilities, it has never been more important to consider the evidence and adopt infection prevention and control strategies and actions now. Your commitment to good hand hygiene is vital. One simple action can prevent major harm and help save lives.

Raising the bar for 5 May next year

Next year, WHO will again issue a global call to action inviting health-care workers throughout the world to actively campaign for improved hand hygiene to reduce health care-associated infections. To date, nearly 6 000 health-care facilities have registered their support for this critical initiative, representing several million patients and staff. We are now aiming for 10 000 registrations by 5 May next year. For more information about the day, planned global activities and WHO regions where facilities are registered, go to <http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/en/>.

The next edition of this newsletter will be published in March 2010. To subscribe, please send an email to patientsafety@who.int, marking your email "newsletter".