

# **Project to Develop the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy**

**Report of the WHO World Alliance for  
Patient Safety Drafting Group**

**24-25 October 2005  
Vancouver**

**FINAL REPORT**



**World Health  
Organization**

## Background and Overview

The Fifty-fifth World Health Assembly passed resolution WHA55.18 in May 2002 calling upon Member States to “pay the closest possible attention to the problem of patient safety and to establish and strengthen science-based systems necessary for improving patients’ safety and quality of care.”<sup>1</sup> The Assembly urged the WHO to develop global norms and standards and to support efforts by Member States in developing patient safety policies and practices.

In June 2003, the WHO commissioned a background paper to review the available literature on defining and classifying adverse events, to propose a draft framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of various patient safety classifications systems and to suggest a draft glossary of patient safety terms.<sup>2</sup> A number of technical experts participated in a WHO working group in October 2003 to consider this background paper and further lay the groundwork for the development of an international patient safety event taxonomy.

The WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety was launched in October 2004. To build upon the work undertaken in October 2003, the World Alliance introduced the Project to Develop an International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy as one of its six programs in its *Forward Program 2005*. The goal of this project is to support the development of a taxonomy of internationally acceptable patient safety concepts to be used for the collection, coding and classification of adverse events and near misses in health care settings worldwide. The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy will enable the global healthcare community to review, evaluate and learn from near miss and adverse event data at the international level as well as develop evidence-based preventive strategies.

The World Alliance established a Drafting Group, comprised of patient safety and classification experts, to guide the development of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy. The first meeting of the Drafting Group was held on 24-25 October 2005 in Vancouver, British Columbia. The meeting took the form of a guided discussion based on background papers<sup>2,3,4,5,6,7</sup> and presentations. During the meeting the Drafting Group adopted the mission statement developed by the 2003 Working Group – to “develop a comprehensive standard taxonomy on patient safety, useable by all WHO Member States to facilitate improved information sharing, learning and system change in order to reduce health care-related harm.” The Drafting Group also defined the

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<sup>1</sup> Fifty-Fifth World Health Assembly Res. WHA55.18. 18 May 2002.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, Patient Safety: Reduction of Adverse Events through a Common Understanding and Common Reporting Tools (2003, June) *Towards an International Patient Safety Taxonomy: A review of the Literature on Existing Classification Schemes for Adverse Events and Near Misses, A Draft Framework to Analyze Patient Safety Classifications and a Draft Comparative Glossary of Patient Safety Terms*. Geneva, Switzerland: J. Loeb and A. Chang.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization (2003, October) *Towards a Common International Understanding of Patient Safety Concepts and Terms – Taxonomy and Terminology Related to Medical Errors and System Failures: A Report of a WHO Working Group Meeting*.

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization, Family of International Classifications Overview (2004, June).

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization, Alliance for Patient Safety (2005, September) *Toward an International Patient Safety Taxonomy: Updated Review of the Literature 2003-2005*. Geneva, Switzerland: H. Sherman, J. Loeb and A. Chang.

<sup>6</sup> Patient Safety Event Taxonomy – Version 1.0 (PSET<sup>TM</sup>-v.1.0) – Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

<sup>7</sup> Chang A, Schyve P, Croteau R, O’Leary D, Loeb J. The JCAHO patient safety event taxonomy: a standardized terminology and classification schema for near misses and adverse events. *Int J Qual Health Care* 2005;17(2):95-105.

specific purpose for the Project to Develop the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy and a strategic plan to operationalize the mission statement.

The background papers and proceedings of the meeting form the basis of this report.

## **Participants**

Thirteen participants and five observers attended the first Drafting Group meeting. Participants were an interdisciplinary group of classification and patient safety experts with considerable experience with patient safety taxonomies and/or event reporting systems. The observers represented a diverse group of organizations committed to patient safety. A complete roster of participants and observers is attached as Appendix A.

The following individuals served as officials during the meeting:

Chairman: Dr. Martti Virtenan  
WHO Officer: Mr. Martin Fletcher  
Rapporteur: Ms. Hilary Coates

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the first meeting of the Drafting Group were to:

1. Define the purpose for the Project to Develop an International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy; and
2. Develop a strategic plan for the development of an international patient safety event taxonomy.

## **Recommendations**

The Drafting Group reached consensus on the purpose of the Project to Develop an International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy: to *“define, harmonize and group patient safety concepts into a classification that will elicit, capture and analyze factors relevant to patient safety in a manner conducive to learning and system improvement in an adaptable yet consistent way across the entire spectrum of health care and across cultures and languages”*.

The Drafting Group adhered to certain criteria when designing the strategic plan to fulfill the project’s purpose.

- The strategy to develop the taxonomy should comply with the specifications required of all WHO Family of International Classifications.
- The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should be concept driven as opposed to “term or label” driven to ensure the meaning of the concepts will not be lost when translated into different languages.

- The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should add value to the current classifications and reporting systems being used in various countries. The Drafting Group believed it was important to align the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy to further individual country initiatives (i.e., Australian Incident Monitoring System in Australia, the National Reporting and Learning System in the United Kingdom, and the National Quality Forum in the United States).
- The development of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should be inclusive of a wide range of stakeholders. International acceptability is a key aim of the work.
- The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should easily mapped to existing classifications with relatively low resource expenditure.
- The scope of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should cover both adverse events and near misses.
- The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should be sensitive to cultural and language issues.

The Drafting Group felt it was important to strive for maximum comparability of patient safety information on an international level. It acknowledged that this amount of comparability may not be achievable. Global health care systems are faced with differing and competing issues related to patient safety. Global health care systems are at varying stages of development. Adoption of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy will be voluntary.

The strategic plan for the development of the taxonomy should begin with determining the critical concepts related to patient safety which should be included in the international taxonomy. This should include a review of those contained in the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organization's Patient Safety Event Taxonomy (PSET<sup>TM</sup>-v1.0), in the WHO's International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and International Classification of External Causes of Injury (ICECI), and in other patient safety taxonomies in use internationally. These concepts will then be tested against the needs of identified stakeholders (both individuals and organizations) using a modified Delphi, or consensus building, approach. Concurrently, the conceptual framework for the taxonomy should be designed. It should be comprehensive and consist of concepts, axes, factors and attributes. Once the concepts and the conceptual framework have been finalized, they will be integrated to form a draft of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy. The International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy will then undergo a two step field testing process (alpha and beta testing) using the WHO network of centers in addition to case evaluation using a select number of use cases not included in the field testing. Alpha testing will be undertaken to ensure face, construct and content validity. Beta testing will test real world usability.

## Next Steps

Five task forces were formed to implement the strategic plan. Drafting group members volunteered to take the lead for each task force.

1. Conceptual framework – Professor Bill Runciman (lead)
2. Delphi planning and implementation – Professor Richard Thomson (lead)
3. Concept identification – Joint Commission (lead)
4. Stakeholder identification – Mr Martin Fletcher and Joint Commission (leads)
5. Field testing and evaluation – Dr Tjerk van der Schaaf (lead)

It is envisioned that the following should be completed by the end of April 2006 to serve as the basis for discussion at the second Drafting Group meeting scheduled for 4 May 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland:

1. A list of concepts to be used during Delphi testing
2. A list of stakeholders (both individual and organizations) to be involved during Delphi testing
3. A plan for Delphi testing
4. A draft conceptual framework for the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy

In order to complete the above, the task forces should meet regularly and on an as needed basis. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations should provide technical advice and assist in facilitating the development process.

The Delphi testing and integration of concepts into the conceptual model should be completed between the second and third Draft Group meetings. This should result in a draft of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy that is ready for field testing and use case evaluation. The agenda item for the third Drafting Group meeting should be the approval of the draft International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy for field testing and use case evaluation. The third Drafting Group meeting is currently scheduled for the end of October 2006 to coincide with the International Society for Quality in Health Care 2006 annual meeting in London, England.

## Summary

In conclusion, the Drafting Group recommends to the World Alliance for Patient Safety that:

1. The purpose of the Project to Develop an International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy be to *“define, harmonize and group patient safety concepts into a classification that will elicit, capture and analyze factors relevant to patient safety in a manner conducive to learning and system improvement in an adaptable yet consistent way across the entire spectrum of health care and across cultures and languages”*.
2. The strategy to develop the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should comply with the specifications required of all WHO Family of International Classifications.

3. The development of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy should follow a stepwise process that meets the needs of and builds consensus and ownership amongst the stakeholders and Member States.
4. The second and third Drafting Group meetings should be scheduled for May 2006 and October 2006 to ensure progress toward completion of the International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy is being made in a timely fashion.

Respectfully submitted for approval on 7 December 2005.

## APPENDIX A

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE LA SANTE

### International Patient Safety Event Taxonomy Project First Meeting of Drafting Group

Vancouver, Canada 24 and 25 October 2005

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