Blood Transfusion, a Multi-step Process
Blood transfusion is an essential part of patient management. It is prescribed for the purpose of saving lives and improving patients' outcome. Blood transfusion is often perceived as a simple mechanical task. It is however a complex, multi-step process, repetitive in nature, involving different professionals and crossing many clinical and management boundaries and there is no one group of staff that is fully in-charge of the entire clinical transfusion process in the hospital. Following the prescription for blood transfusion, the process of providing safe blood to a patient depends upon a set of interconnected steps, including the collection of blood samples from the patient who is the intended recipient; sending the patient's samples to the blood bank for pre-transfusion testing; issuing of compatible blood from the hospital blood bank to the clinical area; administering blood transfusion at the patient's bedside and following up of the transfused patient. There is a potential for errors at a number of critical points in the process.

Safe Clinical Transfusion and Patient Safety
While transfusion can save lives and greatly improve health when used correctly, unsafe use can lead to ineffective and unsafe care, increased morbidity and mortality risk to the patient, and higher costs. Transfusion of incorrect blood component (administration of blood intended for another patient) remains the single most common serious hazard of transfusion. Ensuring patient safety during the clinical transfusion process requires commitment at the highest level in government and also requires improvement of practices at individuals' level, the professionals, the multi-disciplinary team, the health care organization and the health care system. Safety of the clinical transfusion process and patients' safety becomes even more important for patients for whom regular transfusions play a life-saving role, such as patients with thalassaemia.

Role of Nurse and Midwives
Nurses and midwives are in an excellent position to strengthen transfusion safety during patient care. As the largest group of health care professionals providing round-the-clock care, working from the grass root level and at the periphery to the tertiary level, they are directly involved in the entire clinical transfusion process. Further, nurses and midwives have the greatest amount of patient contact and are often the first to recognize: the need for transfusion such as in post-partum haemorrhage for preventing maternal mortality, and the adverse transfusion events. Experiences in many
countries have shown that strong leadership from the nursing, midwives and other related professions is required that will lead to positive system reform for safe clinical transfusion practice contributing, in particular, to improved maternal health and patient safety.

WHO Interregional Consultation

WHO/HQ Blood Transfusion Safety Team (WHO/BTS) working with three WHO regions (AFRO, EMRO and SEARO), and the departments of ‘Making Pregnancy Safer’, 'Patient Safety Programme', Injection Safety' and 'Health Professions Networks, Nursing and Midwifery' team at WHO/HQ, proposes to convene a 3-day interregional consultation on the roles of nurses and midwives in ensuring safe transfusion for patient care. This consultation is being jointly organized by the Sharjah Blood Transfusion and Research Centre and co-sponsored by the Government of United Arab Emirates and will be held at the Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 19 to 21 April 2010. This event will also be held in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF), World Federation of Haemophilia (WFH), International Council of Nurses (ICN) and International Confederation of Midwives (ICM).

A total of around 60 participants will be invited for the consultation from 20 countries (AFR, EMR and SEAR regions). Nominations of three participants from each country will be invited to include representatives from Ministry of Health overseeing nurses' and midwives' functions and education; and from the nursing and midwifery associations at national level; and WHO Collaborating Centers for nursing and midwifery. The methodology of the consultations will include presentations, group discussions, development of country plans and recommendations.

The twenty countries identified for this workshop are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The facilitators for this workshop will include two international consultants as well as WHO, UNFPA, WFH, ICN and ICM professionals. Representatives from inter-governmental and international organizations working on global blood safety matters will also be invited.

Working with Partners

Following WHO materials are planned to be introduced during the consultation, which have been developed in collaboration with different partners:

- **Safe Transfusion Practice (STsP): Training Toolkit** developed by WHO in collaboration with Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service, to build capacity and competency of nurses and midwives for use in all hospitals and health facilities where transfusions are being prescribed.

- **An aide-memoire on 'Clinical Transfusion Process and Patient Safety'**: developed by WHO in consultation with experts in transfusion medicine as part of WHO Global Collaboration on Blood Safety activities.

- **'Phlebotomy guidelines'**: developed by WHO and CDC, Atlanta.

Objectives of the Consultation

1. To highlight and identify the importance of role of nurses and midwives in ensuring safe clinical transfusion practice;
2. To provide a platform for countries to share experiences in the current clinical transfusion practices among nurses and midwives and develop evidence-based strategies to ensure patient safety during transfusion;

3. To introduce WHO Aide Memoire on 'Clinical Transfusion Process and Patient Safety', Phlebotomy guidelines', and Training Toolkit on 'Safe Transfusion Practice'.

4. To identify key elements to be integrated into nurses and midwives education and training for safe clinical transfusion;

5. To identify countries' priorities for action and development of country action plans

6. To make recommendations to WHO/BTS and other international partners for supporting countries in establishing systems for safe transfusion for patient care.

**Expected Outcomes**

1. Identification of critical roles of nurses and midwives in contributing to safe transfusion for patient care.

2. Facilitate information sharing and communication of evidence-based strategies and innovative approaches to ensuring patient safety during clinical transfusion process in hospitals.

3. Introduction and familiarization to participants of WHO publications and materials to promote patient safety and safe clinical transfusion practices.

4. Identification of countries' priorities for action and development of country action plans

5. Review and refining of strategies and activities of international organizations and institutions for policy guidance and technical support to respond to countries' needs in ensuring safe transfusion for patient care.