



WHO 3rd European Autumn School on

Quality of Care and Patient Safety

Athens, Greece, 20–24 October 2025

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Background

After two successful editions of the European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety, in 2022 and 2023, the WHO Athens Quality of Care and Patient Safety Office, in collaboration with the WHO Collaborating Centre for Education, Research and Evaluation of Safety and Quality in Healthcare, from NOVA National School of Public Health, Lisbon, Portugal, will host the WHO 3rd European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety. This initiative is designed to advance scientific knowledge and strengthen expertise in health-care quality and patient safety across the WHO European Region. It provides a platform for health and quality managers, health-care professionals, policy-makers and, for the first time, patient association representatives to build knowledge and skills in advancing quality of care and patient safety across the region.

This comprehensive capacity-building and training programme aligns with the second WHO European Programme of Work and WHO's vision for the European Region over the coming years. Recent crises have revealed systemic vulnerabilities in health care, underscoring the need for better preparedness, more resilient supply chains and fairer access to high-quality care. At the same time, climate change, demographic changes and the rising burden of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions are reshaping health-care needs. Digital transformation is creating unprecedented opportunities – through artificial intelligence-enabled diagnostics, telemedicine and data-driven approaches – so long as innovation remains inclusive and equitable. Capacity-building initiatives such as the WHO European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety are critical for positioning health leaders across the Region at the forefront of these developments and providing them with the ability to promote high quality and safe care.

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Course details

The WHO 3rd European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety is a flagship initiative dedicated to advancing scientific knowledge in health-care quality and patient safety. This intensive, week-long programme will take place from 20–24 October 2025 in Athens, Greece.

The primary objective of this Autumn School is to cultivate a deep, comprehensive understanding of the complex dimensions and best practices within the field of quality of care and patient safety. Through a diverse array of engaging panel discussions, interactive lectures and collaborative workshops, participants will explore key topics in quality of care such as taking a systems approach to quality, understanding and prioritising outcomes that matter to people, the use of data and importance of transparency, the role of people and leadership and a drive to change, and examining digital solutions and quality innovations.

In addition to the sessions, participants will engage in a daily group activity on quality of care policy design. This exercise, conducted in small groups, is designed to provide practical experience in creating and refining policies that address critical issues in quality improvement and patient safety at the national level, while simultaneously fostering a collaborative and innovative learning environment.



Location

The course will be held in person in Athens, Greece.



Language

The Autumn School will be delivered in English. Simultaneous translation to Russian will be available. Fluency in English is preferred to ensure effective comprehension and articulation of public health concepts and active engagement with other participants.



Manual

The WHO 3rd European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety offers a comprehensive manual designed to support participants throughout the programme. This resource provides in-depth guidance on the key principles and practices covered in the sessions. Additionally, the manual provides a crucial guide for the quality of care policy design activity.

Participants and speakers



The WHO 3rd European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety brings together a distinguished cohort of participants, including high-level health-care professionals, policy-makers, patient association representatives and experts from across the WHO European Region. The programme will be further enriched by high-level global speakers from leading academic institutions, WHO and prominent health institutions who will offer critical insights and strategic guidance.

Programme outline



The programme provides an in-depth exploration of the latest advancements in quality of care and patient safety, featuring pioneering case studies and insights from leading health policy experts and country experiences. It is specifically designed to empower high-level participants, key decision-makers across the health system and international experts on quality of care and patient safety. This carefully crafted course aims to enhance understanding of key concepts and practical methodologies for driving positive transformations within health-care systems. The goal is to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to optimize health-care systems, improve patient-centred outcomes, reduce inefficiencies, build resilience, scale equity and underscore the importance of a well-prepared health-care workforce capable of delivering high-quality care under challenging circumstances.

Quality of care policy design group activity



This is a core element of the WHO 3rd European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety. It is designed to help participants apply course concepts by co-developing a practical, country-level quality improvement solution. Working in multidisciplinary country teams, participants will co-design a policy package tailored to a selected national context. With an emphasis on implementation and evidence-informed action, the exercise guides teams to identify priority gaps, propose realistic solutions and outline steps to strengthen health-system resilience and patient outcomes. The activity culminates in a pitch-style presentation, where teams present their rationale, strategic priorities and implementation approach, demonstrating alignment with country needs and capacity.

Why a course in quality of care and patient safety is important

Quality of care and patient safety are vital for accessible, equitable and timely patient-centred health care, and form the foundation of robust health systems and universal health coverage.

Quality of care interventions improve outcomes, ensure evidence-based therapies and act as a safety net, preventing errors and reducing harm. Globally, an estimated 8.6 million people die each year from treatable conditions. In low- and middle-income countries, approximately 60% of these deaths are linked to poor-quality care.¹ In the WHO European Region, significant disparities in the quality of care and patient safety remain. Reducing variation in care between hospitals has been shown to help prevent avoidable deaths, reduce readmissions and shorten hospital stays.² It is estimated that up to 10% of patients experience adverse events during health-care delivery. Enhancing patient safety alone could potentially save over 3 million lives annually.³

"We really need an advanced course on quality of care and patient safety because this topic is critical to achieving outcomes that matter to people most. We need to design systems that pay more attention to quality, and we need to explore innovations in quality of care and new approaches that, for example, take more equity and patient experience into account. This way, we can have modern and high-performing health systems."

João Breda, Head, Athens Quality of Care and Patient Safety Office, WHO Regional Office for Europe

"I believe this course will be a great opportunity to reinforce the necessary networking to put quality improvement and patient safety at the top of every national health agenda."

Paulo Sousa, Head, WHO Collaborating Centre for Education, Research and Evaluation of Safety and Quality in Healthcare

- 1 Kruk ME, Gage AD, Joseph NT, Danaei G, García-Saisó S, Salomon JA. Mortality due to low-quality health systems in the universal health coverage era: a systematic analysis of amenable deaths in 137 countries. *Lancet*. 2018;392(10160):2203–2212 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31668-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31668-4)).
- 2 Van Wilder A, Bruyneel L, Cox B, Claessens F, De Ridder D, Vanhaecht K. Identifying high-impact-opportunity hospitals for improving healthcare quality based on a national population analysis of inter-hospital variation in mortality, readmissions and prolonged length of stay. *BMJ Open*. 2025;15(1):e082489 (<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2023-082489>).
- 3 Global patient safety action report 2024. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024 (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/376928>). Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

“Having a course on quality of care and patient safety is perhaps the most important capacity-building, networking and learning opportunity we can offer to health practitioners and decision-makers across the world, including the WHO European Region. Looking at and improving the quality of care can save over 5 million lives.”

Blerta Maliqi, Unit Head,
Quality and Safety, WHO headquarters

Improving quality of care fosters health-care system resilience and efficiency, making use of digital tools and innovation and ultimately contributing to better value for money spent. Additionally, it promotes health-care equity by addressing delivery disparities, ensuring all patients receive equal high-quality care.

However, a well-designed health-care system alone is not enough. Training health-care professionals, managers and policy-makers in quality of care and patient safety is crucial to building their capacity to adopt continuous improvement and a data-driven culture. Working with communities and patients is also a critical component in building quality care that is truly people-centred and equitable. Quality of care training enhances strategies to engage people in health-care design, leading to better patient experiences.

This course facilitates future training and collaborative networks in quality of care and patient safety, enabling health-care professionals, managers, patients and policy-makers to better learn how to safeguard individual health and meet health-care needs equitably.

“What you have here, which is bringing different people from different countries and backgrounds, is a recipe for learning and for improving in the long run.”

Dimitri Panteli, Programme Manager,
European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies



What participants will gain from the course

Through a comprehensive blend of keynote lectures, panel discussions, workshops, case studies, group activity and networking time, participants will be exposed to an in-depth exploration of critical aspects of quality of care and patient safety. They will also be empowered with knowledge, skills and strategies that drive continuous improvements in health-care practices and patient safety at national, regional and local levels.

During the Autumn School, participants will:

- 1 contemplate critical challenges and improvement opportunities in quality of care and patient safety by utilizing innovative examples of good practice and case studies;
- 2 advocate for action through a person- and community-centred approach to quality of care and patient safety;
- 3 collaborate and engage with experts in a systems approach to quality, outcomes definitions and measurement, leadership for change, data and transparency, digital solutions and quality innovation to generate action-oriented insights that will provide pivotal resources for strengthening country-level health systems;
- 4 engage with diverse participants, including representatives from patient organisations, allowing for in-depth discussions on how policies and programmes can impact different stakeholders;
- 5 be encouraged to explore innovative approaches and new technologies that advance quality of care and patient safety;
- 6 boost their personal and professional global networks, fostering a community of professionals committed to elevating global health-care standards and enhancing safety of care in the WHO European Region and beyond; and
- 7 deliberate on the significance of health-care professionals' well-being and the involvement of patients and families in improving safety and quality of care.

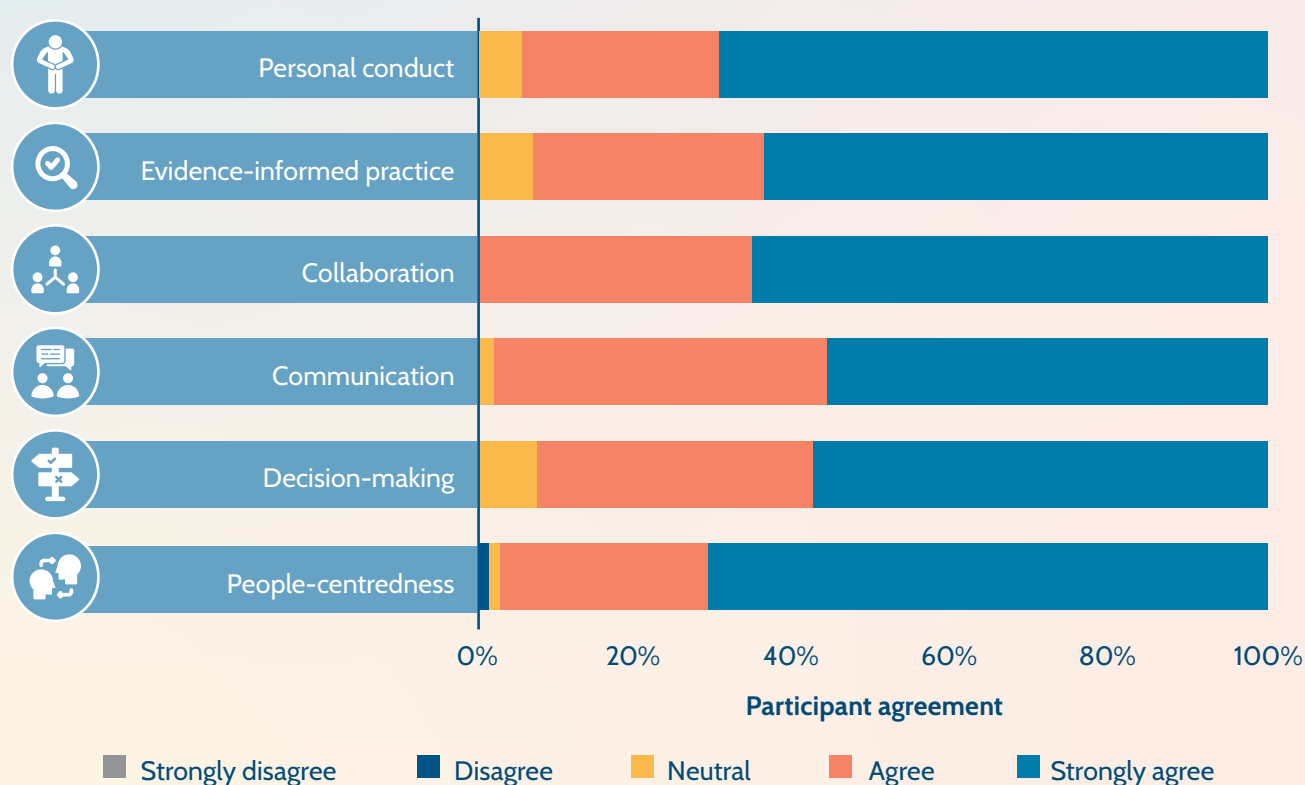
Highlights from the previous edition

For the two previous editions of the Autumn School, there were 46 participants (14 in the first edition and 32 in the second) from 14 countries in the WHO European Region. Participants identified as major strengths of the course:

- the quality and variety of experts, facilitators and the topics discussed;
- the holistic, evidence-based, interdisciplinary, patient-centred, whole-system and practical approach; and
- the opportunity to connect with people and to network and build partnerships.

Figure 1 shows feedback regarding participants' knowledge acquisition in relation to various aspects of the 2nd WHO European Autumn School on Quality of Care and Patient Safety, held in Lisbon, Portugal, in October 2024: 36 of 38 participants responded to a survey on course outcomes.

Fig.1. Course participants' knowledge acquisition



“Patients don’t care if you follow the guidelines. They want to be healthier. So we need to measure and define quality as the outcomes that matter to patients. That is good quality. A course is necessary because we are in the process of redefining what health-care quality means.”

Stefan Larsson, Chairman and Co-founder, International Consortium for Health Outcomes and Measurement

For an understanding of participants’ impactful experiences and insights from the previous editions of the course, we invite you to watch the highlights videos.



1st EDITION



2nd EDITION

