

GLOBAL LAUNCH

GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY CHALLENGE ON MEDICATION SAFETY

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Medication Without Harm



World Health
Organization

Medication Without Harm



**Global Patient Safety Challenge
on Medication Safety**

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Foreword

More than 10 years ago, with colleagues in the World Health Organization (WHO), I was involved in establishing the foundation programme of a global patient safety initiative that was the first of its kind. It was wide-ranging and led to the launching of two Global Patient Safety Challenges. It also created a programme led by patients and families who had suffered avoidable harm from health care, and it set a clear agenda for research and development, among many other areas of work aimed at improving safety globally.

In the last decade, the WHO Patient Safety Programme has raised awareness across the world of the key concepts and strategies in patient safety. It has inspired passion for the universal cause of making health care safer. It has secured commitment at the highest level among health ministers and health leaders in Member States of WHO. It has provided standards, evidence-based guidance and practical tools to support those involved in the design of patient safety programmes within countries' health care systems. It has championed the use of the stories of patients and families who have been the victims of unsafe care.

Significant portions of the Programme's initial work have been delivered and a new direction and new priorities are now required for the next phase in this programme. Moreover, the global context of patient safety as a science has evolved considerably since the creation of the Programme. At the time,

there were few, if any, national agencies with a recognized mandate to work on patient safety and virtually no training and education programmes in patient safety globally. Currently, many Member States have active safety and quality programmes, campaigns and agencies, although some still ask the World Health Organization to provide implementation assistance.

The WHO Patient Safety Team has received strong feedback from major stakeholders and experts that a third global patient safety challenge should be the first of these new priorities and would be greatly welcomed. The Global Patient Safety Challenge is essentially a programme of change aimed at improvement and risk reduction. The programme blends evidence-based interventions with multi-modal implementation strategies. They seek to achieve widespread engagement and commitment. They span the needs of all countries. They are most impressive when they develop the features of a social movement, as the first and second challenges managed to do.

I was delighted and honoured, two years ago, when Assistant Director-General, Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, asked me to advise on the design of a third Global Patient Safety Challenge on medication safety. Dr Kieny and WHO's Director-General, Dr Margaret Chan have given me, as well as the world's patient safety community, unfailing support in continuing to pursue the goal of safer care as a core component of universal health coverage.

In the hard work of bringing this historic Challenge to life, the WHO Secretariat and leading world experts and stakeholders have given invaluable advice and support.

In participating in the work to create this third Global Patient Safety Challenge, I have been driven and inspired by three things. Firstly, an awareness of studies in the 1960s that identified sources of medication error that can, and do, still kill and harm patients in hospitals around the world today, nearly sixty years on. Secondly, that there are many individuals and groups in the fields of pharmacy, medicine, nursing, and other professions, who have been fighting for decades to see the day when medication safety would become a global priority; their passion has always been to save lives from this long-standing intractable type of avoidable harm. Thirdly, over the years, I have spoken to many people who have lost loved ones to medication-related harm; their stories, their quiet dignity and their acceptance of situations that should never have arisen have moved me deeply. It is to the memories of all those who have died due to incidents of unsafe care that this Challenge should be dedicated.

Sir Liam Donaldson

WHO Envoy for Patient Safety