

B3 Patient safety: Towards an international agenda for action

Leader: Andrei Issakov

Rationale:

Rationale: Patient safety work has received new impetus from a number of events in the recent past, including a growing body of evidence on adverse events in health care beginning with the publication of the results of the Harvard Medical Practice Study in 1991, followed by subsequent research in Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America in particular. The 1999 publication *To err is human: building a safer health system* by the Institute of Medicine in the United States of America provided further data and brought the subject to the top of the policy agenda and the forefront of public debate worldwide.

Within this context, WHO has identified the need for a concerted international effort, in which it plays a proactive leadership role, with a broad system perspective of patient safety as a major challenge of quality improvement and enhancing provider performance. Resolution WHA55.18 of the 55th World Health Assembly held in May 2002, confirms this, and calls on the Organization to carry out a number of activities aimed at improving patient safety and quality of care: development of global norms and standards; promotion of evidence-based policies and mechanisms to recognize excellence in patient safety internationally; encouragement of research on the subject; and assistance to countries.

The work has already begun. It will create the evidence base on the epidemiology of adverse events in health care, their prevention and mitigation of their effects when they occur, and develop a framework for WHO's support to countries.

A number of affluent countries have taken the lead by making patient safety a priority and starting initiatives towards its improvement. WHO's work on patient safety aims to bring the benefits of these initiatives to all Member States, as in the long term making health care safe may confer greater health gain than almost any other public health programme.

Objective:

The goal of the session is to contribute to the development of a common international agenda on patient safety, as a fundamental component of quality. The activity is intended to:

- increase awareness of the need for policy level action on patient safety in countries world wide
- discuss opportunities and challenges for health care systems which arise from the World Health Assembly resolution, with particular focus on implications for countries at various stages of development
- build consensus on a process for arriving at international common agenda for patient safety
- identify ways in which countries might benefit from and build on the experiences of others, as well as on existing activities, such as injection and product safety, and identifying ways of creating synergies with these activities.
- consider the collection of worldwide data on adverse events and clinical incidents in the manner of the Uppsala Monitoring Centre (UMC) for adverse drug reactions.

Leadership:

Andrei Issakov, Department of Health Service Provision, WHO, Geneva, Switzerland

Speakers:

1. S. Yunkap Kwankam, WHO Geneva
2. Hilary Coates, Irish Society for Quality in Health Care
3. Susan Williams, UK National Patient Safety Agency
4. Bruce Barraclough, Australian Council on Safety and Quality in Health Care

Preliminary Agenda:

Welcome and brief introduction of panellists

1. The WHA resolution on quality of care: a unifying theme for patient safety work
2. Approaching the patient safety agenda
3. An overview of national patient safety reporting systems
4. Towards a global taxonomy on patient safety
5. Discussion and conclusions