



Address by

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REGIONAL DIRECTOR
WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION
to the
THIRD GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY CHALLENGE:
“MEDICATION WITHOUT HARM”
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

Muscat, Oman, 17–18 September 2017

Your Excellency,

Dr Ahmed Ben Mohammed Obaid Al Saidi, the Minister of Health,
Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, Director General of the Quality Assurance Center,
Dear colleagues and distinguished experts,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to participate today in this strategically important meeting being held in the beautiful city of Muscat. I am happy to join HE Dr Ahmed Al Saidi, whose presence reflects the interest and care of the government of Oman in investing in health-related areas, and its eagerness to provide highly efficient and quality health services in line with WHO's strategic directions. In fact, this reflects the wisdom and civic mindedness of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Ben Said of Oman to promote investment in the health sector to fulfil the aspirations of the Omani people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This meeting, in which WHO is launching the Third Global Patient Safety challenge “*Medication without Harm*” in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, encourages Member States to strengthen common actions to integrate medication safety in national health policies and practices.

The focus of the Global Patient Safety Challenge “*Medication Without Harm*” is on strengthening health systems to reduce medication errors with the goal of reducing the level of severe, avoidable harm related to medications by 50% over the next five years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Patient safety represents the reduction of risks for health care-related harm. It demands a broad range of actions, including safe use of medicines, infection control, equipment safety, safe clinical

practice and a safe environment for health and medical care at different levels of the health care system. Medications are the most common treatment intervention used in health care around the world. When used safely and appropriately, they contribute to significant improvements in the health and well-being of patients. However, despite the best intentions of health care providers and the design of health care systems, unsafe medication practices and medication errors are a leading cause of avoidable harm in health care systems. One landmark study conducted in six countries of the Region, which was published in the British Medical Journal, assessed the prevalence of adverse events in developing countries. It showed that up to 18% of hospital admissions were associated with patient harm that was the result of medical interventions. The study reported that 34% of adverse events are related to medication and therapeutic errors. Moreover, most of these adverse events (80%) were preventable and avoidable.

Resolution WHA55.18 on patient safety, adopted by the 55th World Health Assembly in 2002, urged Member States to pay the closest possible attention to patient safety and to establish science-based systems for its improvement. The WHO patient safety programme works to raise awareness and political commitment to improve the safety of health care at different levels and facilitate the development of patient safety and health care quality policies and practices in the various countries, making outreach, operational tools and the necessary “know how” available.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some countries in the Region have developed formal pharmacovigilance programmes or policies, but these are very limited in other countries. Furthermore, there is wide disparity in the maturity of pharmacovigilance systems in the Region, a situation that underscores the need for multi-stakeholder efforts to bolster pharmacovigilance programmes and strengthen regional collaboration to develop programmes still in their nascent stage.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region has made notable progress in patient safety initiatives, especially in the development of a comprehensive set of normative interventions to support the delivery of safe care and the provision of support to Member States in the development of national quality and safety policies and strategies to ensure that patient safety priorities are properly addressed and sustained throughout the whole health system.

Moreover, the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative, launched by the WHO Regional Office in 2010, includes a set of evidence-based standards that specifically target patient safety domains and provide a framework through which hospitals can deliver safer care. It assesses hospitals from a patient safety perspective, builds the capacity of staff and improves health care safety. This initiative has been recently adopted in Oman, demonstrating a unique, successful example of how this approach can be used to institutionalize patient safety systems as it has in 11 public and private hospitals in Oman.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The countries participating in this meeting are invited to sign a pledge and commit to taking the necessary action to address the aims of the challenge. During this meeting, a model

national medication safety plan, as well as challenges and success stories, will be shared by the Ministry of Health of Oman, which can inspire the development of a draft action plan for countries of the Region for the initial implementation and rollout of the challenge.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Oman, represented by HE Dr Ahmed Ben Mohammed Obaid Al Saidi, the Minister of Health, for hosting the meeting and for the warm reception and hospitality we are always showered with in this great country. I would like also to welcome the representatives of all countries in the Region, the experts and participants of this meeting.

I trust that you will find the discussions fruitful and interesting and that they will create the synergy and coordination required to accelerate improvements in safe medication programmes in countries across the Region.

I wish you all successful and fruitful deliberations in your work and a pleasant stay in Oman.

May Allah protect you all, and may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon you.