



Message from

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on the occasion of
WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY
“SAVE LIVES: CLEAN YOUR HANDS”

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Each year the “SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands” campaign aims to highlight on the global agenda the importance of hand hygiene in health care and at the same time to bring people together in support of hand hygiene improvement locally. It is observed on 5 May every year and it focuses on the importance of improving hand hygiene and celebrating achievements in health care facilities around the world.

Health care-associated infections are one of the most common adverse events in health care delivery and a major public health problem with an impact on morbidity, mortality and quality of life. At any one time, up to 7% of patients in high-income countries and 10% in low-income and middle-income countries will acquire at least one health care-associated infection.

This year the focus of the global hand hygiene campaign is sepsis, which is a serious complication of infection particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The slogan of this year’s campaign is “It’s in your hands – prevent sepsis in health care”. Sepsis is estimated to affect more than 30 million patients every year worldwide, and global rates of sepsis are thought to be growing rapidly. At the Seventieth World Health Assembly, Member States adopted a resolution on improving the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sepsis. WHO will assist Member States by developing guidance for the prevention and management of sepsis, and supporting countries to establish the necessary laboratory capacity, strategies and tools to address sepsis.

The campaign this year highlights the crucial roles of the different players in the health system in reducing health care-associated infections. It calls to action different stakeholders with specially developed messages targeted to health workers, to hospital executives and administrators, to policy-makers and to infection prevention and control leaders.

Despite the critically important role of hand hygiene in reducing health care-associated infections, overall compliance with hand hygiene in health care settings is inadequate. The

dedicated campaign website¹ provides a range of useful documents and tools that support health care facilities in the assessment of hand hygiene practices, as well as the implementation of concrete and evidence-based actions.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 2239 health care facilities in 22 countries have registered for this campaign. This number demonstrates the many ongoing efforts in the Region to promote safer care. Nevertheless, it needs to be substantially increased during 2018 to have a real impact on health care-associated infections across the Region.

I urge all health care facilities in the Region to join this movement through the “SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands” website. This message is an appeal to health care institutions in all sectors to register and commit themselves to improving hand hygiene practices, and thereby help to save more lives.

Thank you.

¹ <http://www.who.int/infection-prevention/campaigns/clean-hands/en/>