



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**  
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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**  
**to the**  
**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON THE SECOND GLOBAL PATIENT SAFETY**  
**CHALLENGE: SAFE SURGERY SAVES LIVES**  
**Amman, Jordan, 9–10 May 2009**

Your Excellency, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Regional Workshop on the Second Global Patient Safety Challenge: Safe Surgery Saves Lives, here in the historic city of Amman.

It is my pleasure to start by welcoming His Excellency, Dr Nayef Al Fayez, Minister of Health, Jordan to our meeting, and by thanking him for hosting this meeting. This is consistent with the commitment of the Ministry of Health of Jordan to the cause of patient safety and the impressive work that the field of patient safety has witnessed over the years in Jordan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One of the core functions of WHO is to provide leadership on matters critical to health and to engage in partnerships where joint action is needed, with the ultimate goal of saving lives. Stemming from this goal, our attention in the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has been focused over the past few years on saving patients from avoidable causes of morbidity and mortality.

Surgical care is an essential component of health care worldwide. It has been estimated that 234 million surgeries are performed in the world every year. The change in disease patterns worldwide is raising the demand for surgical services considerably. Epidemics and infections are giving way as leading causes of death to ischaemic heart disease, cancers and trauma, which need

surgical interventions. The available evidence suggests that as many as half of the complications and deaths arising from surgery could be avoided if certain basic standards of care were followed. Studies in developed countries have shown a peri-operative rate of death from inpatient surgery of 0.4% to 0.8% and a rate of major complications of 3% to 17%. These alarming rates are likely to be much higher in developing countries. Thus, surgical care and its complications represent a substantial burden of disease worthy of attention from the global public health community.

In 2008, WHO and the World Alliance for Patient safety launched the WHO surgical safety checklist, an initiative led technically by Harvard School of Public Health. The checklist comprises a simple set of surgical safety standards that can be used in any surgical setting. Each safety step on the checklist is simple, widely applicable and measurable. The surgical checklist was evaluated in eight hospitals around the world and it was shown to reduce the incidence of surgery-related deaths and complications by one third. The pilot test site in the Eastern Mediterranean Region was Al-Amir Hamza Hospital, here in Amman.

Demonstrating high-level interest in the WHO surgical safety checklist and extending support for the pilot testing and implementation on a national scale, His Excellency, Dr Nayef Al Fayez, Minister of Health, Jordan, expressed his full endorsement of the checklist during the official launch of the challenge in Washington D.C. in June 2008. The substantial body of work that arose from the Eastern Mediterranean Region pilot site and the high level commitment offered in its support are well recognized.

Today, we are gathered together to share the experiences deriving from this important initiative, to build the capacities of our policy-makers and clinicians in disseminating and implementing the checklist, and to develop a regional network of safe surgery advocates committed to ensuring that all our patients in all health care facilities experience safe surgery.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The past few years have been extremely prolific with regard to patient safety in this Region. The Regional Office has pioneered and is starting to implement the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative, an endeavour that has been commended and supported by the World Alliance for Patient Safety and is closely observed by other regions and organizations. In March 2007, we

held the 1st regional Patients for Patient Safety workshop, aimed at empowering patients and encouraging their engagement in active dialogue with the health care system. The 1st Global Patient Safety Challenge, Clean Care is Safer Care, has been launched in several countries of the region and several Ministers of Health have committed to addressing health care-associated infections. The results of a research study that documented, for the first time, the prevalence and nature of adverse events in health care facilities in developing countries, was recently completed in the Region. It is hoped that the next few years will be even more productive, with the support and commitment of the leaders of the Region.

This is an opportunity for us to come together and join hands to achieve the common goal of delivering safe surgery. We have representation from the 22 countries of the Region, each offering a dedicated policy-maker and a clinician committed to ensuring the implementation of safe surgery. I encourage you to further promote the surgical safety checklist in your hospitals to ensure that next year, most, if not all hospitals in the Region will have adopted the checklist.

Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking our experts, whose efforts and commitment are highly appreciated, and our participants, and by giving you my full support for the activities exercised during this meeting. I would also like to thank WHO headquarters and the World Alliance for Patient Safety for their efforts, which reflect an excellent example of collaboration within and outside WHO. I hope the outcomes of this meeting will complement the multitude of efforts invested in several directions towards achievement of safe health care systems. Through its activities and support for patient safety in the Region, the Regional Office will continue to strive towards achievement of the goal of patient safety in health care systems.

Thank you