

CALL TO ACTION

“COVID-19 AND BEYOND: DELIVERING SAFETY FOR THE PATIENT AND CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER”

A call to action to the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the G20, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Arab League to provide significant support for patients and front line health workers across the world.

In countries around the world, the public have applauded the selfless, heroic work of health workers who have put themselves in harm's way to protect all patients (COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients).

Currently, an estimation of 10 percent of the total number of people infected with COVID-19 worldwide is attributed to health workers with thousands having lost their lives. This is in addition to mental burnout and exposure to malpractice suits.

Although the commitment by health workers has been demonstrated for generations, the current global pandemic has focused its attention on the importance of the need to guarantee the safety of health workers, particularly if patients are to be kept safe.

We strongly support the initiative of the WHO to dedicate World Patient Safety Day on the 17th September 2020 to the safety of health workers.

We strongly support the WHO initiative to publish and promote a global charter for the protection of health workers' health, safety and welfare on World Patient Safety Day. We recognize that it is for Heads of State and Governments to endorse the Charter, and for their Governments to implement the guiding actions recommended in that Charter.

We therefore call upon leaders including those of the G7, G20, EU, AU, ASEAN; Arab League and the OAS to endorse the WHO Charter and in particular urgently implement the following principle recommendations in this Call to Action;

1. Recognize that health workers face hazardous working environments, being continuously exposed to several risks such as occupational injuries and illnesses and their safety directly affects the safety of patients.
2. Develop a close interlinkage between health worker safety and patient safety programmes at the system as well as point of care levels in order to provide safer care;
3. Create a global fund to promote the highest level of safety in health (health workers, patients and institutions), based upon the promotion of best practice nation- and worldwide;
4. Create a transparent system for accurate incident reporting and integrated metrics and dashboards reflecting indicators of patient safety and health worker safety;
5. Create a “blame free culture” through open communication channels for health workers to encourage the reporting of adverse clinical incidents and promote a global benchmarking and learning system for work – related adverse events to health workers;

6. Appoint a Commissioner at a national level whose responsibility is to develop national programmes, to provide a policy framework for the safety of patients and health workers, and to promote safer health systems;
7. Ensure that as part of national pandemic preparedness plans and in tackling antimicrobial resistance, health workers are guaranteed access to personal protective equipment, the latest testing technology and are prioritized for vaccination;
8. Promote measures that particularly address the health, welfare, personal safety and employment rights for health workers especially that of women, who make up of 90% of nurses worldwide, in line with ILO standards;
9. Include health worker safety in the 14th General Programme of Work (GPW 14) of the WHO.
10. Recognize that safety of patients and health workers are foundational to the resilience of healthcare systems and the sustainability of the global economy.

These 10 principles are based on the lessons learned from COVID-19 and other recent pandemics. Health workers deserve concrete actions to improve their safety - the future safety of patients depends upon it.

We urge the Governments of the United Kingdom and Italy, as the incoming Presidencies of the 2021 G7 and G20 to actively promote these principles during the ministerial and Heads of Government meetings next year.