

# Let us look back with pride

As we celebrate the 4th global annual day of *SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands* on 5 May 2012, let us look back with much pride at such a visible commitment to patient safety from the health-care community around the globe. *SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands* is a global call to action—an action so simple, but often so difficult to achieve.

It is now seven years since the launch of the WHO First Global Patient Safety Challenge “Clean Care is Safer Care” in 2005. We have come far since then. The challenge to tackle health care-associated infection on a worldwide scale was a mighty and daunting one. Our main product, the WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care and the accompanying multimodal improvement strategy, was developed within a clinical setting and further validated to ensure applicability to all healthcare settings worldwide, irrespective of resources available. But there remained the unsaid question: would it be used as widely as we hoped?

The answer can be found in our annual 5 May celebrations. The 2012 edition has attracted so far the participation of over 15 000 health-care facilities in 156 countries worldwide. This corresponds to approximately 10 million health-care workers and more than 3.7 million patient beds! 48 countries have taken the action a step further and initiated their own hand hygiene campaigns. I am certain that many others will follow their example in the near future.

Many health-care facilities and countries have shared their national and local activities with WHO and these are updated regularly on the dedicated WHO web pages. This is a clear example of the level of commitment and innovative spirit of those working to prevent health care-associated infections around the globe in support of *SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands*. In recognition of this commitment, all registered health-care facilities will receive personalised commendation letters from WHO.

As in previous years, the main objective of 5 May is to encourage even more commitment and increase registrations of health-care facilities. Again, I repeat my call to those willing to invest their time in the project and I ask them to consider taking on the role of “hand hygiene ambassador” to promote a greater awareness worldwide, in particular in Africa and South-East Asia.

## **In 2012, the call to action is to:**

- **Create** YOUR action plan based on your facility's results using the WHO Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment Framework. WHO has prepared Template Action Plans for you to facilitate the development of your action plan at every level from inadequate/basic or intermediate to advanced/leadership. You can also refer to the more detailed Action Plan included in Part III of the WHO Guide to Implementation.
- **Share** YOUR plan! Sharing is part of global learning. On or around 5 May 2012, share information focused on hand hygiene activities in support of *SAVE LIVES*:

*Clean Your Hands* from your own web pages and WHO will feature these web links to facilitate and promote dissemination and lessons learned from the field.

In addition, this year, and following 2 years of work by an expert group, WHO “Clean Care is Safer Care” is pleased to announce the upcoming launch of a guidance document on the principles and practice of hand hygiene in outpatient care settings. Based on the WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care, the document aims to address specific challenges related to the improvement of hand hygiene and the application of the WHO “My five moments for hand hygiene” approach in such settings. The document presents available evidence on the risk of pathogen transmission by hands and practical examples of care situations to help facilitate understanding and optimal compliance with hand hygiene requirements.”Five moments” posters have been adapted to these care situations and are available on the web site.

You are at the frontline of patient care. Continue to raise the profile of hand hygiene at the point of care wherever you are. Continue to develop innovative strategies and action plans for hand hygiene improvement. Think partnership and link to national campaigns or help make these happen.

On behalf of all our patients around the world, it gives me great pleasure to offer you my heartfelt congratulations for your continued support to improve their safety and quality of care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. Pittet', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Didier Pittet  
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