

## PRESS RELEASE

### **THAILAND COMMITS TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF PATIENT SAFETY BY ADDRESSING HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATED INFECTION IN THE COUNTRY**

Bangkok, 20 June, 2007: Thailand today has pledged to address health care-associated infections, also known as nosocomial infections. H.E. Dr. Vallop Thaineua, Deputy Minister of Public Health, signed up to the Global Patient Safety Challenge at a ceremony in Bangkok today. By signing the pledge the Deputy Minister has committed Thailand to the highest standards of practice to reduce the risk of health care-associated infection.

WHO's First Global Patient Safety Challenge with the theme "Clean Care is Safer Care" emphasizes that hand hygiene is the primary measure to reduce health care-associated infection and the spread of antimicrobial resistance. To date, 43 countries, including Bangladesh, Bhutan and India from the South-Eastern Region, have signed the pledge.

Dr. Thaineua said "Considering that the majority of these infections are treatable and avoidable, we will continue to strive to further reducing the incidence of health care-associated infection in Thailand". Following the pledge event, a memorandum of cooperation was also signed between the Ministry of Public Health and over 10 Members of the Health Care Network of Thailand who vowed to work together to ensure "the safety of each patient who receives treatment from every health service facility in Thailand."

Dr. P. T. Jayawickramarajah, WHO Representative to Thailand congratulated Thailand for pledging and mentioned that WHO will continue to provide technical support to the country in achieving this common goal of Patient Safety. He emphasized that Patient Safety needs to be addressed at all levels of health care delivery and by all professionals and occupations in health. Strengthening long-term country capacity would help ensure the delivery of safer care.

Prof. Didier Pittet, leader of the Global Patient Safety Challenge said "Promoting Clean Care is Safer Care is not a choice. It is our duty to patients, their families and health-care workers. Let us move forward together. Each of us can make a small difference; significant improvement requires an effort from all of us."

Dr. Supachai Kunaratanapruk, Director General, Department of Health Service Support, speaking on the occasion, reviewed the activities undertaken by health professionals and institutions in Thailand to prevent health care-associated infections at national, sub-national, and health care facility levels, in particular in the areas of hand hygiene, drug safety, blood safety, injection and immunization safety, clinical procedures safety, and water, sanitation and waste management.

Thai delegates who were present at the national launch also participated in the first day of the Regional Patient Safety Workshop on "Clean Care is Safer Care", held in Bangkok 20-22 June. Dr. Samlee Plianbanchang, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia, in his message on the occasion said "We regard the involvement of Thailand as an important contribution to the attainment of the goals of this initiative on regional and global levels given the key role it plays in the South-East Asia Region".

## Background Note

The First Global Patient Safety Challenge 'Clean Care is Safer Care', a flagship programme of the WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety, was launched in October 2005. It brings together the WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care with ongoing work on blood safety, injection and immunization safety, safer clinical practices, and safe water, sanitation and health care waste management.

Health care-associated infection is a major area of concern in patient safety as it affects millions of people worldwide and complicates the delivery of patient care. Infections contribute to patient deaths and disability, promote resistance to antibiotics and generate additional expenditure to those already incurred by the patients' underlying disease.

At any given time, more than 1.4 million people worldwide become seriously ill from such infections. Between 5% and 10% of patients admitted to hospitals in developed countries acquire these infections. In some developing country settings, the proportion of patients affected can exceed 25%.

The aim of "Clean Care is Safer Care" is to strengthen the commitment of interested Member States to address health care-associated infection and raise awareness on the critical role of hand hygiene in controlling their spread. The WHO programme builds upon existing country efforts and initiatives on infection prevention. Reducing the spread of health care-associated infection will be a critical step towards enhanced and long term safety in health care.

The implementation of the Global Patient Safety Challenge comprises of three major strategies:

1. Building global awareness through global and national "Clean Care is Safer Care" campaigns;
2. Inviting countries to make national statements pledging to address health care-associated infection, and
3. Testing the implementation of the WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care in selected districts worldwide.

As part of these strategies, WHO Member States have been invited to make a formal statement pledging their support to implement actions to reduce health care-associated infection within their country and to share results and learning internationally.

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