News from WHO headquarters

Announcement of the World Hand Hygiene Day – 5th May 2022
When a health facility’s “quality and safety climate or culture” values hand hygiene and infection prevention and control (IPC), this results in both patients and health workers feeling protected and cared for. To prioritize clean hands at the right times and with the right products in health facilities, people at all levels need to believe in the importance of hand hygiene and IPC to save lives, and to act as key players in achieving the appropriate behaviours and attitudes towards hand hygiene. In other words, health workers at all levels and people accessing health care facilities need to unite on clean hands.

This year’s theme for World Hand Hygiene Day, 5 May 2022, is focused on recognizing that we can add to a facility's climate or culture of safety and quality through cleaning our hands but also that a strong quality and safety climate and culture will encourage people to clean hands at the right times and with the right products. We need to unite, work together and talk about hand hygiene for high quality and safer care everywhere.

This year’s slogan is: Unite for safety – clean your hands

You can use this powerful campaign image to start sharing the sharing message:
Further resources and the calls to action for specific audiences will be launched in January 2022.
IPC at the next WHO Executive Board meeting

In the light of a request from a Member State at the 149th session of the Executive Board in June 2021, an item on IPC was included on the provisional agenda of the Board’s 150th session.

A report has been prepared that outlines the impact caused by the spread of infection and antimicrobial resistance acquired in health care facilities, the global situation of IPC programmes at the national and facility levels, as well as gaps and challenges in implementation of IPC. It also provides an overview of WHO’s recent activities on IPC and proposes some priorities and actions aimed at improving implementation of IPC programmes. The Board will take note of the report and is expected to provide further guidance on action that could be taken by the Organization in response to the burden of infections and antimicrobial resistance acquired in health care.

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) and antimicrobial resistance

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) was very successfully celebrated from 18-24 November 2021 under the theme “Spread Awareness, Stop Resistance”. The full list of events can be found here.

One of the highlighted events was a webinar held on 19 November 2021 entitled “Safe maternity for all: the key role of infection and prevention and control”. The recording can be found here. New WHO IPC in maternity training material were launched during the webinar is also available free on Open WHO here.

Inappropriate use of antibiotics is frequent in many settings and an important driver of antibiotic resistance. Easily accessible, evidence-based guidance from trusted sources is lacking for many common infectious syndromes in many countries, especially in low- and middle-income settings. There is currently a public consultation call on the draft WHO Essential Medicines List Antibiotic Book that can be found here.
Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) – Regional and country experiences, infection prevention and control strategies for SARS-CoV-2 infection

On 14th December the MMA hosted a webinar entitled Regional and country experiences, infection prevention and control strategies for SARS-CoV-2 infection. There were over 900 registered participants, mostly from within Malaysia, but also from Japan, Singapore, United Kingdom, United States of America. Speakers included Dr MaryLouise McLAWS, University of new South Wales, Sydney, Australia (presentation here), Dr Vincent Chi Chung CHENG, University of Hing Kong and Dr Joycelyne BASSEA and IPC Consultant supporting the WHO WPRO COVID-19 response (presentation here). The recording can be accessed here.

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC)

The US CDC has announced its Global Action in Healthcare Network (GAIHN) that consists of countries, healthcare facilities, and public health partners working together to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats in the healthcare setting. GAIHN will target threats like antimicrobial-resistant infections, healthcare-associated infections (HAIs), and COVID-19 through infection prevention and control. For more information, please visit the website at GAIHN | Global Safe Healthcare | Infection Control | CDC.
The American University of Beirut (AUBMC), Lebanon

Beginning in 2020 Lebanon has faced severe economic and financial collapse that has rendered more than half of the population below the poverty line and without proper access to health care and resulted in a considerable exodus of health care workers such as doctors and nurses. Consequently, the national health care system was overwhelmed and its ability to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic was severely weakened.

The public health efforts led by the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) initially succeeded in containing COVID-19 transmissions by imposing lockdown measures but shortly afterwards, infection increased drastically until hospital beds became unavailable. During this time, the American University of Beirut Medical Center (AUBMC), a private 364-bed tertiary care center, served as a model to other hospitals in the country on the management of COVID-19 infection. Extensive education and training, updated isolation precautions, and personal protective equipment were provided internally as well as to 10 peripheral hospitals. A new COVID-19 manual was circulated including updated chapters on clinical management, PPE donning and doffing and the cleaning and disinfection of the medical equipment and environmental surfaces. Furthermore, training videos and simulation exercises were developed and organised and locally manufactured alcohol-based hand solutions fulfilling the WHO requirements were procured. The IPC AUBMC team, comprising 4 senior professionals, led these IPC efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite all these improvements, during the peak of the outbreak in Lebanon (in January-February 2021), the risk for COVID-19 transmission increased among AUBMC employees. Most of the transmission was community acquired however, with <5% being hospital acquired. Stringent efforts have been maintained to try to limit HAI of COVID-19 and the graph below shows the incidence of infection among AUBMC HCW compared to the national population.
Concerning vaccination, to date, approximately 35% of the population are fully vaccinated. However, with the emergence of new variants, Delta and Omicron, the COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, and Lebanon is facing an increase in COVID-19 cases, 1700 cases per day. This high case load is likely due to lack of compliance in public health and social measures among the population. Valuable lessons for IPC (although not all positive) are continuing to be learnt and implemented.

**Jhpiego – One Well, 2 Pumps, 1,900 people**

When common water pumps in a mountain village threaten to become COVID-19 hotspots for its women and families, the Jhpiego-supported and USAID-funded program, along with a community partner, designed a practical solution rooted in infection prevention and control practices. The fix became a model for other areas in the state of Chhattisgarh. Listen and watch [here](#):