



# Template Letter to Advocate Hand Hygiene to Managers

## Introduction

**This document provides a template letter to aid a local Hand Hygiene Co-ordinator or person(s) interested in introducing or reinvigorating hand hygiene improvement initiatives within a health-care facility in advocating and encouraging commitment, support and investment in the initiative from key decision makers within the health-care facility.**

For health-care facilities at the early stages of planning and initiating a hand hygiene improvement strategy, senior managers/leaders may not be aware of the importance of hand hygiene or the current initiatives to improve hand hygiene and health care-associated infection (HCAI) across the world. It is important to raise awareness and gain the support of such influential health-care workers such that comprehensive hand hygiene improvement initiatives can be actioned.

The messages contained within this template will most likely form the basis of the initial dialogue with key managers/leaders responsible for decision making on matters of safety/quality improvement and infection control. The initial communication may therefore take the form of a meeting, where the content of the letter is used as the basis for discussion. This can then be followed up by a memo, letter or email as appropriate for the local context.

This is a sample letter. Therefore, where appropriate, local information can be inserted or the text modified to reflect local style.

<insert name of health-care facility>  
<insert address line 1>  
< insert address line 2>  
< insert address line 3>  
< insert address line 4>  
  
<insert date>

Dear <insert name>

I am writing to you to seek your support for a new initiative to reduce health care-associated infection (HCAI) and thus save lives at our facility.

Globally, millions of HCAs occur on a daily basis, many of which result in serious harm or death. HCAI places a serious disease burden and significant economic impact on patients and health-care systems. Yet good hand hygiene – the simple task of cleaning hands at the right times and in the right way – can save lives.

The burden of clinical disease attributable to HCAI in <insert name of facility> is <insert any data from hospital infection registers, prevalence studies in the facility or from national studies, or state “unknown at the present time”>. However, in developed countries, rates range from 5–15% and can affect 10–40% of patients admitted to intensive care units. In developing countries, data is limited, but some studies show that up to 19% of patients have an HCAI at any one time<sup>1</sup>. HCAI is clearly a major patient safety problem.

The simple action of hand hygiene has been shown to dramatically reduce HCAI, particularly those caused by resistant micro-organisms. For this reason, hand hygiene improvement provides a gateway to wider improvements in safety and quality, and is a low cost intervention.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed the "My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene" approach, to simplify training and measurement of compliance, and enhance promotion of the times when hand hygiene needs to be applied. A visual outline of the "My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene" approach is attached to this letter. The "My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene" approach encourages health-care workers to clean their hands (1) before touching a patient, (2) before clean/aseptic procedures, (3) after body fluid exposure risk, (4) after touching a patient, and (5) after touching patient surroundings.

All health-care workers should be aware of this approach. However, global compliance with hand hygiene is as low as 8% in some studies: i.e. hand hygiene occurs less than 1 in every 10 times that it should. At <insert name of the health-care facility>, compliance is currently unknown <or insert value if it is known>, awareness of the importance of hand hygiene is low, and the existing infrastructure does not enable acceptable compliance levels (<amend this sentence as appropriate for the facility situation>).

WHO has developed an improvement strategy accompanied by a toolkit and materials available via their website, to support health-care workers to improve hand hygiene at their facilities. The toolkit could help <insert name of the facility> to determine our current level of compliance with the "My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene" approach and to implement measures to improve hand hygiene and thus save lives at our facility.



In brief, the strategy to improve hand hygiene is concerned with:

- Increasing hand hygiene compliance so that more health-care workers clean their hands more of the time
- Changing the system, so that it is possible to clean hands at the point of care<sup>2</sup>, using antiseptic (alcohol-based) handrubs
- Provision of an accessible and safe water supply, with soap and towels available to health-care workers in clinical areas
- A combination of other measures designed to influence health-care worker behaviour and including the support of senior management for hand hygiene and infection control

<Insert name of health-care facility> is already attempting/has in the past attempted <amend as appropriate> to address safety/infection control through <insert any examples of recent attempts>. Implementation/expansion <delete as appropriate> of specific hand hygiene improvement initiatives will build on this good work.

Improving hand hygiene will save lives, unnecessary suffering, and money. The support of influential leaders and health-care workers such as yourself will be vital to achieve these goals. In particular, your support and input for the following activities is requested:

- Authorise/mandate a hand hygiene improvement programme
- Identify a Hand Hygiene Co-ordinator/project manager to direct the initiative
- Help secure funding for any identified activity or resource needs
- Support the development and implementation of a comprehensive action plan to improve hand hygiene
- Support education activities
- Verbally support/promote the improvement at high-level organizational meetings
- Verbally support/promote the importance of hand hygiene to health-care workers
- Participate in some of the baseline surveys

I hope that you will recognise the importance of improving hand hygiene at our facility and will be prepared to discuss the development and implementation of a comprehensive action plan further.

Yours sincerely

<add name>

<add title / position>

<sup>1</sup>WHO Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care (2009)

<sup>2</sup>**Definition of point of care:** The place where three elements come together: the patient, the health-care worker, and care or treatment involving contact with the patient or his/her surroundings (within the patient zone). The concept embraces the need to perform hand hygiene at recommended moments exactly where care delivery takes place. This requires that a hand hygiene product, e.g. alcohol-based handrub, if available, will be easily accessible and as close as possible (within arms reach), where patient care or treatment is taking place. Point-of-care products should be accessible without having to leave the patient zone.

Availability of alcohol-based handrubs at the point of care is usually achieved through staff-carried handrubs (pocket bottles), wall-mounted dispensers, containers affixed to the patient's bed or bedside table or to dressing or medicine trolleys that are taken into the point of care.