



# Consultative Meeting Planning for the Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety

19-20 April 2016, WHO Headquarters, Geneva

## Concept Note

### Background

Unsafe medication practices and medication errors are a leading cause of injury in developed and developing countries. In the United States alone, it is estimated that as many as 1.5 million patients are harmed and thousands are killed every year as a result of a medication safety issue<sup>1</sup>. Statistics in low and middle countries are limited and vary widely, indicating that the true burden of unsafe medication practices is grossly underestimated. Moreover, the costs of medication errors are as high as \$3.5 billion each year, not including lost wages, decreases in productivity or additional healthcare costs<sup>1</sup>. Data from other countries indicates that as many as 78% of patients' medication histories have errors<sup>2</sup>, which have the potential to significantly harm the patient if medications are duplicated or omitted. Worldwide, the cost associated with medication errors has been estimated as \$42 billion annually<sup>1</sup>. This is almost 1% of total global health expenditure.

Medication errors can occur at any stage of the medication use process, namely during prescription, transcription, preparation, administration and/or monitoring. Only 25.8% of errors were detected before they advanced to the subsequent stage<sup>3</sup>. There are stopgaps at each stage in the process, so any error that reaches the patient is not due to the inappropriate actions of one person, but rather a combination of factors that result in a system failure. As a result, systematic changes and process improvement as a whole should be the focus of the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety.

Advances in prescribing and medication management, tools to empower patients to safely manage their own medications, capacity building of health professionals for safer medication practices, increasing the role of pharmacists in medication practices, continued provider and patient education, improvements in data systems and personal health histories; and approaches for better teamwork across caregivers and hospital units together could allow the world to improve medication practices in today's healthcare systems. The Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety will propose solutions to address many of the obstacles the world faces today to ensure the safety of medication practices.

### WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety

To address the global problems of unsafe medication practices and medication errors, WHO plans to launch the Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety, with the overall goal to "to reduce medication errors by 50% in the next five years". As it is difficult to measure avoidable harm from unsafe medication practices and impractical to detect absolute changes regarding preventative outcomes, medication error reduction therefore will serve as a quantitative surrogate benchmark to measure the success of the Challenge and overall reduction of harm.

## **Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety Objectives**

1. Analyze the global baseline of medication errors and strengthen the global monitoring system to facilitate the tracking of medication errors.
2. Develop a multi-modal strategy to engage governments, professional and patient safety organizations, and front-line healthcare providers to improve medication safety by decreasing the incidence of medication errors by means of improving prescribing, transcription, preparation, dispensing, administration and monitoring practices.
3. Develop guidelines, tools, materials and technologies to promote and support medication safety and reduce the incidence of medication errors.
4. Engage key stakeholders, partners and industry to actively pursue efforts to improve medication safety.

## **Consultative Meeting**

WHO will be engaging key international and national partners in substantive discussions at all stages of the development of the Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety. The Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Unit in the Service Delivery and Safety Department is organizing a consultative meeting to plan for the Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety, on 19-20 April, 2016 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The consultative meeting will bring together approximately 40-50 experts and leaders in medication safety and patient safety. This consultative meeting is the one of the main components of the planning phase of the Challenge and will provide the foundation for the framework development and implementation phases, as well as resource mobilization.

## **Specific objectives of the Consultative Meeting**

1. Review the scope of the problem of medication safety, in particular of medication errors.
2. Review of initiatives of WHO and other partners on this topic; examine what gaps still remain and the scope a potential challenge that could address some of those gaps.
3. Review the draft strategic plan to launch and implement the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety, and propose any amendments or changes.
4. Identify key partners and stakeholders in the Challenge.
5. Review the scope of work of the Steering Board and Working Groups for the Challenge, and obtain the expression of interest to join the multi-disciplinary Working Groups for Challenge implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and developing the global Campaign.
6. Develop a draft action plan and timeline for implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the Challenge.

## **Expected outcomes of the Consultative Meeting**

1. Broad consensus on the framework and strategic plan for launching and implementing the WHO Global Patient Safety Challenge on Medication Safety.
2. Consensus on the scope of work of Working Groups and expression of interest to join the Working Groups.
3. Development of a draft action plan and timeline for implementation and monitoring and evaluation with clarity on roles and responsibilities.

1. Bootman L, et al. *Preventing Medication Errors: Quality Chasm Series*. National Academies Press, 2006.
2. Salmasi S, et al. "Medication errors in the Southeast Asian countries: A systematic review." *PloS One*. 10.9 (2015): e0136545.
3. Huckels-Baumgart, S and Tanja, M. "Identifying medication error chains from critical incident reports: A new analytic approach" *The Journal of Clinical Pharmacology* 54.10 (2014): 1188-1197