

Speaker: Dr. Akjemal Magtymova Head of Mission and WHO Representative in Syria.

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Event: Patient Safety Day.

Minister of Higher Education Dr Bassam Ebrahim

Deputy Minister Dr Hassan Jabaji, Representatives of Directorate of Hospitals/ MOHE, university hospital managers, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentleman.

It is my pleasure to stand in front of you today joining you to commemorate the 2nd anniversary of the Global Patient Safety Day.

Although, no one should ever be harmed in health care, according to WHO estimates, there are 134 million adverse events that occur each year as a result of insecure hospital care in low- and middle-income countries, contributing to 2.6 million deaths annually. Some estimates suggest high proportions of hospital expenditures could be attributable to addressing failures in patient safety. Its high costs of human lives and also resources.

Using my personal experience, let me take you a few years back, to 2016, which now is a history... March 2016, London where the Patient Safety Global Action Summit was held. This meeting brought together senior renowned researchers, ministers of health, policy-makers and clinical managers and was hosted by the UK's Secretary of State for Health and Germany's Federal Minister of Health. Attending from the Eastern-Mediterranean, HE Ahmed Al Saidi, Minister of Health of the Sultanate of Oman was also present who proposed the idea of the commemorating the World Patient Safety Day. Oman has marked its own national Patient Safety Day on 17 Sep 2018, one year before the establishment of the World Patient Safety Day on the same date, a step forward to galvanize actions for patients' safety and quality of care.

As you know before joining to lead WHO in Syria, I was privileged to serve people in Oman, and was witnessing the steady steps they undertaken for years towards quality of care improvement and patient safety. In Sep 2018 the WHO CC was inaugurated for training in Patient Safety. I wish to see the day when the travels are renewed and the exchange visits are possible between the countries.

Talking of Oman's experience, it will be wrong not to mention Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari, RD-EMR, who before his current role was the Director for Quality and dedicated years of his life to the subject. Dr Ahmed has requested me to convey his heartfelt greetings to all of you and please allow me to quote from his statement:

“Health workers play an essential role to deliver health services that people need. In pursuing this role they face serious risks of infection, accidents, violence, illness every day. It is crucial that we recognize their professionalism ad dedication and invest in protecting them so that they can provie sage and effective health care to their patients”.

This year the theme is “Safe Health workers – safe patients”....

Safety of health workers – we all witnessed - becomes particularly important in times like what we face now, times of pandemic and current fight against COVID-19. We all are human beings and individuals, and health workfroce has been put at the frontline and our courage and stamina is tested every single day. As we start our careers, as medical students, we all know it well what life path we are choosing and what life path we have chosen as we practice medicine or support medical field:

- It is the life of self-less dedication, benevolence and compassion,
- but also the life of razor-edge knowledge, based on science and high competencies and skills and
- definitely, the life of high values. duty and principles.

This what makes us wake up every day, attend our duties at the most difficult times.

Our duty calls us to take care of safety of health workers, to ensure safety of our patients.

During these times, while the aspects of patients safety are multidimensional – ranging from correct diagnosis, treatment regimen and handling – today the highest risks to patient safety can be mitigated thru infection prevention and control, personal protective equipment to ensure all are safe and protected.

On this day and everyday, we must join the call for action to speak up for health workers safety. We ask for support from patients, their families, all walks of life to support protection of health care workers.

Allow me to take this opportunity to emphasize that the World Health Organization continues to support health institutions with the aim of implementing public health measures including best practices for patient safety & workplace environment.

A lot to learn from the experience of the past 8 months. I am sure the academia and the cohort of participants will be able to consolidate the lessons and revive best practices for health worker and patient safety.

These months were and are also learning for the World Health Organization and we continue sharing the guidelines and work hand in hand with you for the implementation of safety standards, be it sharing the up-to-date guidelines, evidence or supplies and equipment.

I wish you a fruitful workshop and thank the Ministry of Higher Education and the General Authority of Al-Assad University Hospital in Damascus for the preparation of this event.