As part of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) First Global Patient Safety Challenge: Clean Care Is Safer Care, 2009 is earmarked as the year to regalvanize action for hand hygiene at the point of care. With 116 countries having already pledged to address health care–associated infection (HAI) through cleaner, safer care, a 2009 WHO patient safety initiative aims to take these country pledges to the patient bedside with a unique call to action. More than 20 in-country campaigns have developed their own multimodal strategies based on the Clean Care Is Safer Care guidelines. WHO’s vision is that by 2020, all of its Member States will have pledged to establish national, ongoing action to ensure sustained hand hygiene improvement as part of an integrated infection prevention and control program.

BACKGROUND

The specific remit of the WHO Clean Care Is Safer Care program, started in 2005, includes the following:

- Developing and testing the Advanced Draft Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care, published in 2006. This has included support for 8 pilot sites and approximately 300 additional, complementary test sites. Field testing and review of the current evidence, working with a core group of international experts, have further contributed to the finalization of these guidelines. The guidelines are designed to provide Member States, including professionals in the specialty, with evidence-based direction on improving hand hygiene compliance in the short, medium, and long term. They also are aimed at preventing infection and reducing the burden of clinical disease to which poor hand hygiene contributes:
  - Developing and testing a range of supporting implementation tools;
  - Seeking ministerial support for the prevention of HAI through the vehicle of national “pledges”;
  - Raising global awareness of the issue of HAI and how implementing multimodal behavior change strategies can contribute to its amelioration.

WHO’s finalized Guidelines on Hand Hygiene in Health Care can be downloaded from the Clean Care Is Safer Care Web site, http://www.who.int/gpsc/en/.

Cleaner, safer care, at the point of care

An invitation has been extended to all hospitals and health care facilities to register for Save Lives: Clean Your Hands, WHO’s 2009 patient safety initiative. The aim is to encourage hospitals to register to help regalvanize action. Registration by 2 key milestone dates—May 5, 2009 and December 15, 2009—has been actively encouraged to promote ongoing action to ensure sustained hand hygiene improvement as part of integrated infection prevention and control programs.

To support greater global engagement in hand hygiene best practice, WHO is also reviewing and revising an existing suite of implementation tools, and will be developing additional tools and a self-assessment kit based on feedback from many experts worldwide currently working toward cleaner, safer care at the point of care.

YOUR ROLE IN 2009

- Develop national and local activities in your country.
- Join a growing global network of health care providers committed to improving hand hygiene. WHO
will continue to support countries that have fully developed and developing campaigns to share ideas and to discuss how to encourage others toward success with cleaner, safer care.

- Promote and use WHO’s “My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene” in your health care facility (Fig 1).

2009 AND BEYOND

Beyond 2009, WHO will continue to work to promote effective systems for assessing and tracking outcomes associated with compliance and HAIs. Hand hygiene improvement is not a one-off endeavor, as those already on the journey toward improvement are aware. Behavior change, culture change, and training take many years and require ongoing action across all organizational levels. It is anticipated that each year there will be a focused day of action. Countries can hold a Hand Hygiene Forum on the day, as a focus for constantly regalvanizing global action. May 5, 2009 is the launch date for a cycle of annual centralized global action.

Registering for Save Lives: Clean Your Hands can be done online at http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/en/index.html Countries that do not have immediate or ready access to the Internet can receive information by postal mail.