

Health systems

Quality-assurance management systems

Report by the Secretariat

1. Quality of care is an integral component of WHO's efforts to strengthen health systems. High-quality health services should be effective, efficient, accessible, acceptable, equitable and safe.¹ Ability to assure quality of care – whether acute, chronic or emergency care – depends on the building blocks of health systems. It is affected by the way services are organized, managed and financed; the availability of motivated and competent health workers; reliable information, medical products and technologies; and leadership and governance.

2. The increasing body of experience of ways to improve quality involves policy-makers, health-service providers, and also communities and service-users. Management of quality assurance uses many different approaches to encourage the translation of new knowledge into adapted health-care practices. WHO provides support for Member States' efforts to promote quality by issuing simplified treatment protocols for conditions accorded priority, and guidance on essential medicines and ways to encourage adherence to treatment; by disseminating knowledge on managerial approaches and incentives that improve the performance of health workers and quality of health facilities; by providing training materials; and by helping to strengthen information systems so that they can monitor quality and safety of care. Given that many poor people use private providers for first-contact care, WHO is also concerned with improving quality of care offered by private, as well as by public, providers. The World Alliance for Patient Safety, launched in 2004, raises awareness, encourages political commitment to improve the safety of care, and facilitates the framing of national policy on patient safety and its application.

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¹ See document EB120/38.