



Message from
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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION
on the occasion of
WORLD HAND HYGIENE DAY
“SAVE LIVES: CLEAN YOUR HANDS”

5 May 2017

Health care-associated infections are one of the most frequent adverse events in health care delivery, affecting hundreds of millions of patients worldwide every year.

Each year the SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign aims to highlight on the global agenda the importance of hand hygiene in health care and at the same time to bring people together in support of hand hygiene improvement locally. It is observed on 5 May every year and focuses on the importance of improving hand hygiene and celebrating achievements in health care facilities around the world.

The focus of the global hand hygiene campaign this year is antimicrobial resistance, under the slogan: “fight antibiotic resistance – it’s in your hands”. Hand hygiene is at the core of effective infection prevention and control to combat antibiotic resistance. Campaigning each year on or around 5 May is one important part of improving awareness and behaviour in favour of effective infection prevention and control.

Promoting hand hygiene requires a combination of interventions that address the different types of challenge for compliance, whether related to personnel, policy or infrastructure. The campaign this year highlights the crucial roles of the different players in the health system. It calls to action different stakeholders with specially developed messages targeted to health workers, to hospital executives and administrators, to policy-makers and to infection prevention and control leaders.

Despite the critically important role of hand hygiene in reducing health care-associated infections and the emergence of antimicrobial resistance, overall compliance with hand hygiene in health care settings is inadequate. The dedicated campaign website¹ provides a range of useful documents and tools that support health care facilities in the assessment of hand hygiene practices, as well as the implementation of concrete and evidence-based actions.

¹ <http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/register/en/index.html>

In the 22 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, 1804 health care facilities have registered for this campaign. This number demonstrates the many ongoing efforts in the Region to improve the safety of patients. Nevertheless, this number needs to be increased substantially during 2017 to have a real impact on health care-associated infections across the Region.

I urge all health care facilities in the Region to join this movement on the “SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands” website. This message is an appeal to health care institutions in all sectors to register and commit themselves to improving hand hygiene practices and helping to save more lives.

Thank you.