

**WORLD ALLIANCE FOR PATIENT SAFETY**

# **SUMMARY OF THE EVIDENCE ON PATIENT SAFETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH**

**The Research Priority Setting Working Group of the World Alliance for Patient Safety**



**World Health  
Organization**



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# Preface



This publication of the World Health Organization aims to outline the future direction of patient safety research across the globe. Patient safety research does not have the benefit of the well-established approaches available to other fields of medical study. Multiple hurdles and challenges will need to be faced when designing trials, conducting audits and making

use of novel techniques, such as those that directly involve the patient as a partner in risk identification and problem resolution. This is partly related to the fact that patient safety research is a new field of study and that traditional research methods may therefore need to be suitably adapted.

We must develop a better understanding of adverse events in health care: their causes, how they are reported, how to learn from them and prevent them. Setting nationally and internationally recognized research priorities enables the selection of areas for research that are not only important for individual countries, but also allow collaboration and sharing of findings across geographical borders. This publication outlines the areas that the World Alliance for Patient Safety recommends for urgent attention, through a rigorous consensus process by international experts. Priorities should then be set by researchers and research leaders, according to the preference of countries.

Understanding the complexities of the academic, external funding and peer review systems will require a great deal of energy and a steadfast belief that the results will justify the efforts. We will need courage to promote our area of research and lift it to the forefront of scientific thinking.

My hope is that the material contained here will contribute to the development of research agendas globally, help to define the scope of the problem more accurately, measure its magnitude with renewed precision, elicit fully the appropriate policy and clinical solutions, and close the gap in knowledge that still prevails today.

Sir Liam Donaldson  
Chair, WHO World Alliance for Patient Safety  
Chief Medical Officer for England



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