



## Commentary

## “Clean care for all—it’s in your hands”; the May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, World Health Organization’s SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign

Alexandra Peters MA<sup>a</sup>, Tcheun Borzykowski MSc<sup>a</sup>, Ermira Tartari MS<sup>a</sup>, Claire Kilpatrick MSc<sup>b</sup>, Safiah Hwai Chuen Mai PhD<sup>b</sup>, Benedetta Allegranzi MD<sup>b</sup>, Didier Pittet MD, MS<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Infection Control Programme and WHO Collaborating Centre on Patient Safety, University of Geneva Hospitals and Faculty of Medicine, Geneva, Switzerland

<sup>b</sup> Department of Service Delivery and Safety, Infection Prevention and Control Global Unit, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland



Quality health care should be available to everyone. The World Health Organization’s (WHO’s) concept of Universal Health Coverage (UHC)<sup>1</sup> embodies the urgent need for access to health care for all people around the world. In addition to access, the concept of UHC incorporates the critical element of the necessary quality of delivered health care services. Infection prevention and control (IPC), with hand hygiene as the most effective measure, is a practical and evidence-based approach with demonstrated impact on quality of care and patient safety across all levels of the health system.

Each year, the WHO SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign aims to bring people together in support of hand hygiene improvement globally

on or around May 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>2</sup> This year’s theme for global annual hand hygiene day reflects a strong focus on providing clean care, equally protecting all patients and health care workers from infection and antimicrobial resistance transmission, across all countries, including in low-resource settings.

WHO urges ministries of health, health facility leaders, IPC leaders, health workers, and patient advocacy groups to contribute to effective IPC action, including hand hygiene, as a cornerstone of quality in health care (Table 1). WHO invites all health care facilities to join the 2019 WHO global survey on IPC and hand hygiene by using 2 validated assessment

**Table 1**

May 5, 2019, WHO SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign calls to action

Campaign participants	Calls to action
Health workers IPC leaders	“Champion clean care—it’s in your hands.” “Monitor infection prevention and control standards—take action and improve practices.”
Health facility leaders	“Is your facility up to WHO infection control and hand hygiene standards? Take part in the 2019 WHO survey and take action!”
Ministries of health	“Does your country meet infection prevention and control standards? Monitor and act to achieve quality universal health coverage.”
Patient advocacy groups	“Ask for clean care—it’s your right.”

IPC, infection prevention and control; WHO, World Health Organization.

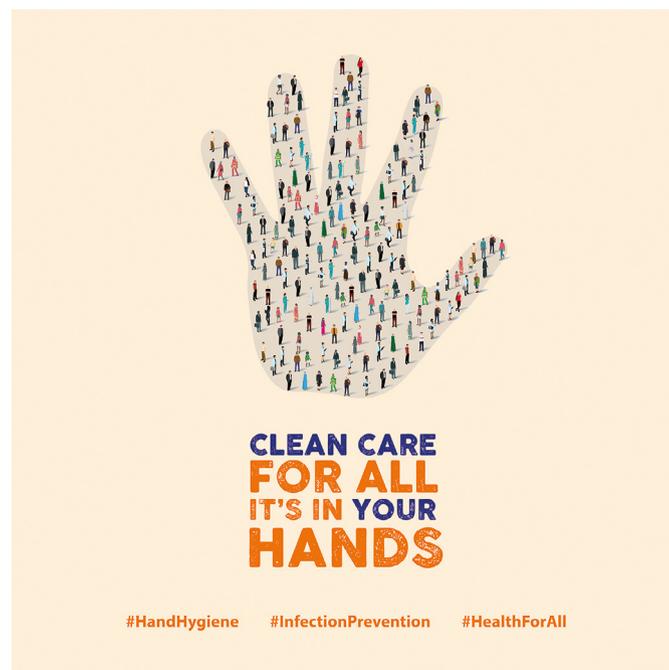
\* Address correspondence to Didier Pittet, MD, MS, Infection Control Programme and WHO Collaborating Centre on Patient Safety, University of Geneva Hospitals and Faculty of Medicine, 4 Rue Gabrielle-Perret-Gentil, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

E-mail address: [didier.pittet@hcuge.ch](mailto:didier.pittet@hcuge.ch) (D. Pittet).

Funding/support: This work is supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), Geneva, Switzerland, and the Infection Control Programme and WHO Collaborating Centre on Patient Safety (SPCI/WCC), University of Geneva Hospitals and Faculty of Medicine, Geneva, Switzerland. Hand hygiene research activities at the SPCI/WCC are also supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (grant no. 32003B\_163262).

The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this article and they do not necessarily represent the views, decisions or policies of the institutions with which they are affiliated. WHO takes no responsibility for the information provided or the views expressed in this article.

Conflicts of interest: None to report.



**Fig 1.** The May 5, 2019, World Health Organization SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign slogan and main promotional image (2019 hashtags: #HandHygiene, #InfectionPrevention, and #HealthForAll). Campaign participants are invited to submit photos or selfies of themselves holding a board with the slogan and hashtags at [www.CleanHandsSaveLives.org](http://www.CleanHandsSaveLives.org).

tools, 1 for evaluating the core components of IPC programs and the other for taking a deep dive into hand hygiene activities (<https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/campaigns/ipc-global-survey-2019/en/>).

On a facility level, the use of these tools gives institutions a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their IPC and hand hygiene programs and provides concrete actions to address existing gaps. These tools allow institutions to improve their IPC practices and policies in a concrete and measurable way, at their own speed, and in their own context. The surveys are anonymous, and global results will be made available only using aggregated data. This means that facilities and ministries of health can commit fully to working on improving IPC and patient safety without fear of scrutiny or possible negative repercussions.

Globally, this survey will allow WHO to provide a situational analysis on the level of progress of current IPC and hand hygiene activities around the world and inform future efforts and resource use for IPC capacity building and improvement. Global surveys using the Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment Framework were already conducted in 2011 and 2015,<sup>3-5</sup> making this year's survey even more crucial for

tracking the implementation of hand hygiene and IPC on a global scale (Fig 1).

Each improvement in IPC contributes toward quality UHC. “Clean care for all—it’s in your hands”!

## References

1. World Health Organization. What is universal coverage? Available from: [http://www.who.int/health\\_financing/universal\\_coverage\\_definition/en/](http://www.who.int/health_financing/universal_coverage_definition/en/). Accessed February 19, 2019.
2. World Health Organization. SAVE LIVES: clean your hands. Available from: <http://www.who.int/infection-prevention/campaigns/clean-hands/en/>. Accessed February 19, 2019.
3. World Health Organization. WHO hand hygiene self-assessment global survey for 2015. Available from: [http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/hhsa\\_framework-2015/en/](http://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/hhsa_framework-2015/en/). Accessed February 19, 2019.
4. Allegranzi B, Conway L, Larson E, Pittet D. Status of the implementation of the World Health Organization multimodal hand hygiene strategy in United States of America health care facilities. *Am J Infect Control* 2014;42:224-30.
5. Kilpatrick C, Tartari E, Gayet-Ageron A, Storr J, Tomczyk S, Allegranzi B, et al. Global hand hygiene improvement progress: two surveys using the WHO Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment Framework. *J Hosp Infect* 2018;100:202-6.