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2019 WHO hand hygiene campaign and global survey: clean care for all—it's in your hands

Many of us, as medical professionals, have devoted our lives to improving human health and wellbeing, but we do not always conceptualise what this looks like on a global scale. As our world becomes more globalised, interconnected, and interdependent, we need to think about health in the same context. On May 5, 2019, through the SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign, WHO is championing universal health coverage.

Universal health coverage means that people worldwide will have access to the quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.¹ The achievement of health-care-related UN Sustainable Development Goals² is not possible without universal health coverage, and access to affordable quality health services is a human right regardless of gender, age, income, and location. We often think of infection prevention and control and hand hygiene as specific areas of patient safety, and they might not be the first fields that come to mind concerning the subject of equitable access to health services. Infection prevention and control and hand hygiene are cornerstones and primary indicators of quality in health care, and are thus inseparable from the larger goal of universal health coverage.

As one of the main resources to deliver universal health coverage, WHO is launching the 2019 Global Survey on Infection Prevention and Control and Hand Hygiene. The survey consists of two self-assessments for health-care facilities: the Infection Prevention and Control Assessment Framework, a new tool; and the Hand Hygiene Self-Assessment Framework, which has been widely used across countries and settings for global surveys in 2011 and 2015.^{3–5} Health-care facilities that took part in both surveys showed a statistically significant improvement in their capacity to promote hand hygiene practices, further validating the possible benefit for institutions to use such tools for self-assessment.⁶

On a facility level, these validated self-assessments give institutions a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of health-care facilities' infection prevention and control programmes, and provide them with concrete tools to address existing gaps and challenges. The tools associated with the Global Survey were developed for a broad range of stakeholders, including ministries of health, health facility leaders, infection prevention and control leaders, health workers, and patient advocacy groups to take action on



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For more on the 2019 Global Survey on Infection Prevention and Control and Hand Hygiene see <https://www.who.int/infection-prevention/campaigns/ipc-global-survey-2019/en/>

Call to action	
Health workers	Champion clean care—it's in your hands.
Infection prevention and control leaders	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 WHO survey 2019 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.

Table: WHO SAVE LIVES: Clean Your Hands campaign calls to action for campaign participants

hand hygiene as a cornerstone of infection prevention and control and quality in health care (table).

Universal health coverage does not mean free coverage for all possible health interventions regardless of the cost (eg, every person on the planet having access to the latest imaging technology or a Da Vinci robot surgical system); it is about getting back to what is most fundamental—ensuring that we reach the half of the world's population that currently does not receive the health services they need. Universal health coverage must centre on adaptable and effective solutions that can be implemented everywhere. Highlighting the importance of infection prevention and control and hand hygiene, and laying the foundations for a global change through self-assessment and improvement pave the way for inroads into a pervasive and urgent global challenge. Although much work needs to be done, it is time for health for all and each of us can meaningfully contribute: clean care for all is in our hands.

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DP works with WHO in the context of the WHO initiative Private Organizations for Patient Safety—Hand Hygiene. The aim of this initiative is to harness industry strengths to align and improve implementation of WHO recommendations for hand hygiene in health care in different parts of the world, including in least developed countries. In this instance, companies and industry with a focus on hand hygiene and infection control-related advancement have the specific aim of improving access to affordable hand hygiene products as well as through education and research. All authors declare no competing interests. The authors are responsible for the views expressed in this Comment 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 Comment.

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