

February 2019 – Oman is showing regional leadership in the Eastern Mediterranean Region by adopting the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative to improve the safety of health care in public and private hospitals nationwide.

Oman is taking patient safety very seriously, and the Ministry of Health is keen to tackle the issue head on. Following a best practice meeting on patient safety organized by WHO, the Ministry showed a high level of commitment and interest in the implementation of the Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative to improve the safety of health care in public and private hospitals nationwide, and a roadmap of actions was developed.

### **Patient Safety Friendly Hospital Initiative**

The initiative started with advocacy and capacity building and assigned focal points for each team from different hospitals. Hospital staff started working at the operational level, and had continuous contact with the WHO Country and Regional Offices.

They were always able to get guidance if they needed to know more or required clarification about how to deal with infection prevention and control, the safe management of drugs, or how to involve patients.

“The Ministry was very receptive to us when it came to what to do first, what preparation is needed, how to communicate, how to build the capacities, how to continue mentoring the teams working on the ground and how to recognise efforts and good performance,” said Mondher Letaief, Regional Advisor, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The implementation of the pilot project in four hospitals in Oman was a milestone in the quest of the Ministry’s Quality Assurance Center to achieve patient safety in its healthcare institutions.

### **Supportive evaluation**

As the patient safety movement had originated from within Oman, the Ministry and hospitals felt a strong sense of ownership over the initiative.

When their new patient safety practice settled down, they were ready to ask for external observers from WHO in order to see if they were complying with the requirements or not. WHO carried out an external evaluation in four hospitals with the aim of providing support. It was not an inspection or audit; rather the process recognized achievements and provided guidance on how to move forward.

Now the work is being implemented in a further 26 hospitals, almost 90% of the main hospitals in Oman. Eight hospitals have now been evaluated by WHO for patient safety; coverage will later increase to all the remaining hospitals in Oman including public and private by 2020.

Through trust and consistent support and because WHO colleagues work with hospital staff in a manner that shows them they are moving forward, together they are achieving concrete change in patient safety.

Other important activities are also taking place. For example, a patient safety curriculum is now operating at health science-related universities so that future health professionals have a good foundation to continue a patient safety culture when they practice in hospitals in future.

Oman also has an annual day to celebrate the awareness of the importance of patient safety, where health practitioners can showcase their achievements in and share good practice.

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