

MALE WARD 5

Introducing standards to improve healthcare delivery in resource-restricted countries

Safe Care

BASIC HEALTHCARE STANDARDS







The **Need for Standards**

Many resource-restricted countries struggle to meet their citizens' healthcare needs and provide a satisfactory level of care, particularly in rural areas.

To put this in perspective: according to the World Health Organisation, the African region suffers more than 24% of the global burden of disease but has access to only 3% of health workers and less than 1% of the world's financial resources – even with loans and grants from abroad. (WHO; Working Together for Health: World Health Report 2006. [Geneva, Switzerland; 2006]).

This dismal situation is exacerbated by the fact that the human and other resources that are in place are often not as efficiently used as they could be. Due to the absence of systems and lack of adherence to quality standards, patients receive substandard care and often die needless deaths.

Furthermore, lack of financial support for primary health providers makes the situation more difficult. If private facilities are to progress, they require access to capital to upgrade equipment, infrastructure and manpower. If public facilities are to progress, governments need to know where to use their finances most efficiently.

It is not surprising then that resource-restricted countries have difficulty in meeting the health care needs of patients. Setting quality standards and offering improvement solutions for resource-restricted settings creates an opportunity to break through this vicious cycle.



The **Initiative**

It will come as no surprise that there is a gap between what citizens in many resource-restricted countries receive when treated at healthcare facilities and the ideal. Lack of qualified personnel, financial means and the enormous burden of disease prevent countries from providing adequate levels of care. In order to address this situation, three organisations from three different continents have combined their strengths and experience to establish the SafeCare Initiative. This Initiative has been set-up to test the theory that regardless of resources, providers can be guided through a novel, structured programme to deliver safer care to their patients. Each organisation brings to the SafeCare Initiative a set of tried and tested instruments, skills and methodologies that reinforce each other. The combination provides a comprehensive system to assist primary healthcare providers in resource-restricted settings to improve their service delivery.

The standards, jointly developed by the Initiative, enable healthcare facilities to measure and improve the quality, safety and efficiency of their services. The SafeCare Initiative introduces innovative tools, instruments and training modules to assist facilities on a journey that begins with the achievement of minimal safety principles, includes manageable steps of quality improvement along the way and – if executed appropriately – will lead to substantial compliance with safety and quality standards and accreditation. The philosophy that underpins the process is that of incremental steps towards excellence, one facility, one step at a time.

This step-wise improvement process can be used by governments, donors and companies to implement performance-based financing incentives. Facilities can be rewarded on the basis of adherence to the pre-defined improvement steps. These incentives will improve the financial situation of the healthcare facilities, as well as allow for a more efficient use of the available resources, since progress can be planned, tracked and rewarded.

The aim of the SafeCare Initiative is to mature into a knowledge-sharing platform that encourages people to think and talk about quality of health care, especially as it relates to resource-restricted countries. The Initiative promotes an understanding of the value of using recognised quality standards and offers solutions for clinics to achieve these. The SafeCare Initiative is open to those who support the concept that all people deserve safe health care and wish to join as members.



“ SafeCare has created standards to ensure that patients receive safe care despite resource constraints ”

PROF. STUART WHITTAKER,
CEO OF COHSASA



Background

In 2010 in Amsterdam, the Joint Commission International (JCI) of the U.S.A., the PharmAccess Foundation of the Netherlands and the Council for Health Service Accreditation of Southern Africa (COHSASA) held talks to address the possibility of applying universal standards in developing countries. The discussion focused on creating standards that provide a solid, secure and realistic framework to ensure that patients receive safe and optimal care despite resource constraints.

The SafeCare Initiative is the brainchild of these founder organisations and is built on their worldwide experience. The Initiative will act as the custodian of internationally recognised sets of standards for defined categories of providers, including: general practitioners, nurse- or clinical officer- driven health posts, mobile and semi-mobile facilities, primary care facilities, community health centres, primary health centres and district hospitals.

The Initiative seeks to promote an understanding of the value of using and implementing standards for resource-restricted settings and monitoring performance via a state-of-the-art information system. It will become a think-tank to understand the causes and factors influencing good and poor health care and the methods required to address deficiencies in structure, process and outcome.

The SafeCare Initiative will generate research papers that pertain specifically to achieving excellent care in deprived environments. The SafeCare Initiative will host annual conferences where knowledge and experience of working with facilities in developing countries will be presented and shared.



JOINTCOMMISSIONINTERNATIONAL – Based in Illinois, U.S, this is the international arm of The Joint Commission, the United States health care accreditation body. Since 1999, Joint Commission International has accredited over 400 public and private health care organisations in 45 countries. Joint Commission International’s standards and evaluation methods stand alone in the world as unique tools designed to provide quantifiable benchmarks for patient care quality and drive positive changes that get noticed by clinical staff, patients and management.



PHARMACCESS FOUNDATION – has experience in over 30 countries in Africa in upgrading and quality improvement of basic healthcare providers such as clinics and district hospitals. PharmAccess’ expertise particularly concentrates on data collection and early upgrading activities, including local assistance of providers with refurbishments, purchase of bio-medical assets and skills-building through interactive workshops. In addition PharmAccess improves the financial situation of health providers by introducing insurance programmes for secured income and business training. This enables clinics to get access to affordable financing mechanisms, including loans and investments.



COHSASA – Based in Cape Town, South Africa, COHSASA is the only accreditation body for healthcare in Africa that is internationally accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua). This means it has been judged by global peers to be a competent healthcare evaluation body with standards that meet principles set out by ISQua. COHSASA has been working in the field of quality improvement and accreditation for over 15 years. During this time, COHSASA has worked in a range of over 530 different types of facilities – from tertiary hospitals to basic clinics – in the public and private sectors in South Africa, the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region and other parts of Africa. Countries in which programmes are running are the RSA, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Rwanda and Nigeria.

The **Joint Method**

The working methods of SafeCare are built on the concrete experience and skills of the founding members. Each organisation brings to the SafeCare Initiative a set of tried and tested programmes that in combination strengthen each other and provide a comprehensive system to assist primary healthcare providers improve their service delivery.

PHARMACCESS FOUNDATION - has vast experience of helping healthcare providers with upgrading and training to help them reach acceptable levels of service delivery. Computerised data collection tools allow for up-scaling of quality improvement programmes. In addition, pioneering incentives have been created to link upgrading efforts to better service delivery through performance-based financing mechanisms.

JOINT COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL - through a wealth of experience in standard setting, evaluating organisations and providing tools to help organisations at all stages of the quality improvement process, the JCI offers, among others, a rapid (self) assessment tool that assists facilities to prepare, enter and undergo quality improvement programmes. The organisation also brings to the table a set of sophisticated e-training modules.

COHSASA - has pioneered a logical system of recognising predetermined levels of improvement in healthcare facility performance that guide progress towards accreditation and has developed a web-based quality information system (CoQIS) that measures compliance levels against the standards and identifies deficiencies that need remedy.

The combined specialities of the individual organisations will support the efforts of healthcare providers, even when hampered by resource constraints, so they are capable of meeting safe standards of care. The combination of methods offers an improvement programme that starts with recognised steps of improvement and may result in accreditation. The uniqueness is that this route is offered in combination with a set of tools, training modules and financial incentives for constant monitoring and evaluation.

It is the belief of the SafeCare Initiative that excellent care can be provided even with limited resources - through proper training, technical assistance and functional administrative structures. Thus, the combined methods of the founding members will provide a comprehensive framework within which excellent care can flourish.



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SafeCare will evaluate the delivery of different service elements, such as laboratory services, inpatient care and management of information”

PROF. TOBIAS RINKE DE WIT,
DIRECTOR ADVOCACY, TECHNOLOGY
AND RESEARCH OF PHARMACCESS



Five key elements of the programme

TOOLS AND INSTRUMENTS - The SafeCare Initiative believes that it has created a range of tools and instruments for data collection and analysis that will make a significant impact in the way health care is delivered in resource-restricted countries. The system allows for constant and precise monitoring of the progress of the facilities from start to finish along the path of quality improvement towards accreditation.

PERFORMANCE-BASED FINANCING - The SafeCare Initiative is galvanised by incentives that rely on quality efforts by healthcare providers to secure attractive loans and low-interest capital. In this way quality efforts are linked to innovative financing mechanisms that continuously drive the process forward.

TRAINING - Training programmes are available at all stages of the SafeCare programme. This includes learning how to understand, interpret and implement the standards, quality improvement and patient safety as well as self evaluation against the standards. To constantly reinforce the learning process, the SafeCare Initiative has developed on-site training and will use e-learning modules and videos.

EVALUATION - The progress of compliance with standards and performance improvement will be monitored throughout the programme. Healthcare providers will be given regular feedback on increasing levels of standards compliance, whether identified deficiencies are being remedied and whether performance targets are being met.

RESEARCH - The SafeCare Initiative incorporates a research component that will measure the effectiveness of the standards in the field. Research will evaluate the impact of the quality improvement programme on healthcare providers and health systems, measuring appropriateness of care, access to care and cost-effectiveness of interventions.

The **Benefits**

The SafeCare Initiative offers a step-wise programme which applies to a wide range of facilities ranging from general practitioners, primary care facilities, to district hospitals. Healthcare providers begin at a baseline level and as they progress to defined levels of achievement beginning with a safety core and evolving upwards, they are rewarded with certificates of recognition of improvement.

The benefit of this step-wise approach is that it encourages facility staff to continue with quality improvement activities. As the steps are recognised, the data provides concrete evidence of progress to donors and government. Improved performance in participating private facilities means they will attract patients and financial investments. For public facilities benefits include efficient planning of resources and cost saving.

Funders and **governments**

Donors and governing bodies are able to use the data collected in the upgrading and quality improvement process about the status quo in individual facilities or across groups of facilities to make strategic and cost-effective decisions about how funds are allocated.

The programme's continuous evaluation on the progress of compliance with the standards offers an opportunity for such advancement to be directly linked to performance-based finance. In other words, the quality improvement progress provides an evidence-based decision model for funders, governments and banks.



“ SafeCare has developed on-site training and e-learning modules to constantly reinforce the learning process ”

PAULA WILSON
PRESIDENT AND CEO
OF JOINT COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL

Facilities and **healthcare staff**

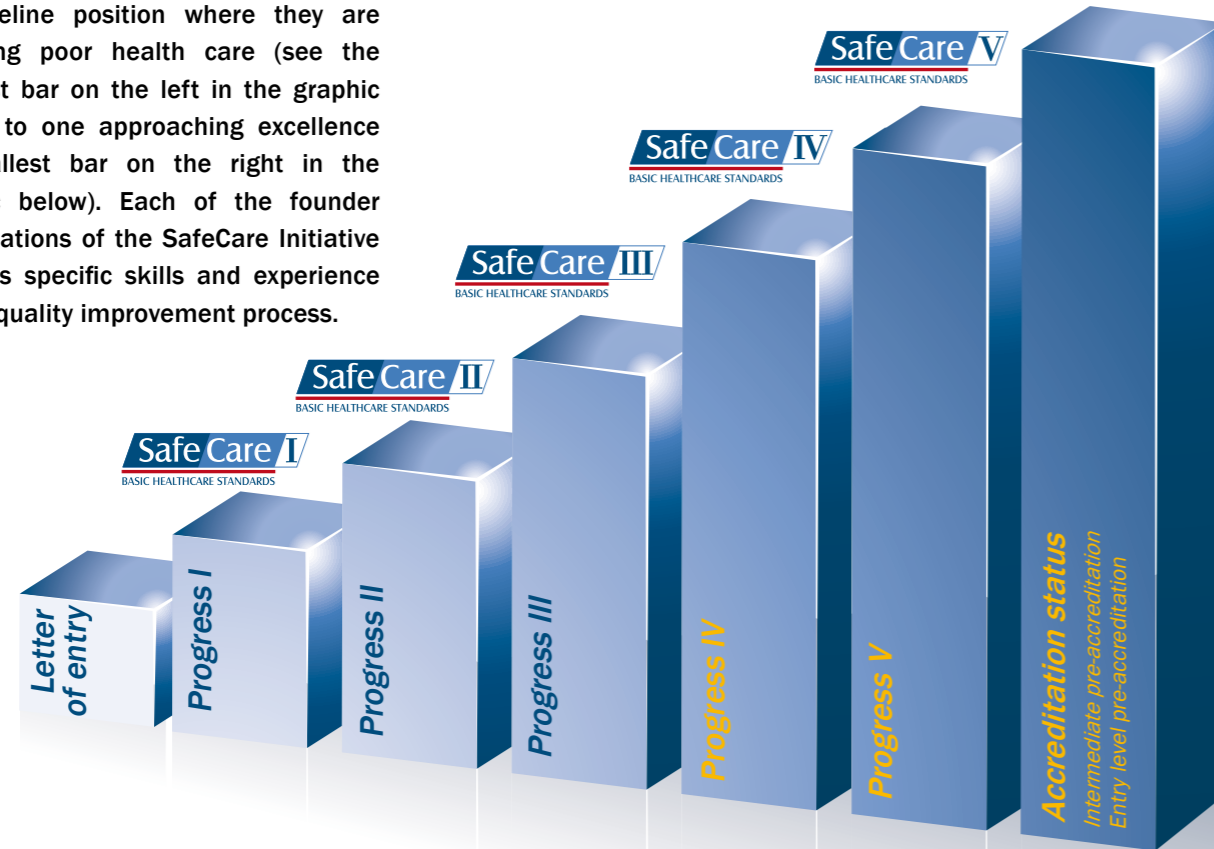
The introduction of quality and safety standards, improvement processes, training, and infrastructure improvement helps to ensure that facilities make the best use of resources. These interventions will lead to clean, safe and well-organised facilities which, in turn, are more likely to promote a sense of well-being and efficiency among their resident health workers.

Communities and **Patients**

Healthcare facilities delivering better service and a safe and clean environment will increase the confidence of patients that they will receive appropriate care. Ultimately, they will begin to associate better care with the SafeCare Initiative label and recognise it as a trusted brand. As more and more facilities improve their performance, the community's health needs will be met.

The **journey** from **unsafe care** to **accreditation**

The three organisations each contribute skills and experience to transform healthcare facilities from an entry or baseline position where they are providing poor health care (see the shortest bar on the left in the graphic below) to one approaching excellence (the tallest bar on the right in the graphic below). Each of the founder organisations of the SafeCare Initiative provides specific skills and experience on the quality improvement process.



Certificates of Improvement under the **SafeCare Initiative**

ACCREDITATION STATUS - Excellent quality systems in place: health care provider has a proven track record of continuous quality improvement, is in substantial compliance with the SafeCare standards, and meets the decision rules for accreditation.

PROGRESS V - Demonstrates long-term commitment to continuous quality improvement, ready for accreditation programme and self sufficiency of continuous quality improvement. Very limited technical assistance required.

PROGRESS IV - Strong quality systems in place, but high-risk areas still in need of attention. Limited technical assistance required.

PROGRESS III - Medium quality strength, acceptable but vulnerable to changing environment. Focus on self evaluation of quality improvement processes using quality indicators, guidelines and standard operating procedures.

PROGRESS II - Modest quality strength, requiring medium technical assistance. Healthcare quality is still likely to fluctuate. Focus on the securing of quality systems, and processes especially in high risk areas.

PROGRESS I - Very modest quality, with continued need for periodic technical support. Focus on implementation of processes and quality systems and the availability of financial means to ensure availability of proper infrastructure and assets.

LETTER OF ENTRY TO THE GRADED RECOGNITION PROGRAM - The organization has shown leadership commitment and a strong desire to provide safe health care and recognizes that significant improvements are needed to reach levels of consistent, efficient, safe quality care for each patient. It still has fluctuating quality healthcare provision due to the unavailability of services at times.

Membership

The SafeCare Initiative will bring together like-minded organisations and people who wish to provide safe health care despite resource constraints. Through advocacy programmes, a website, regular publications, and research functions, the SafeCare Initiative will strive to assist potential members achieve their goals.

If you wish to receive more information or regular newsletters, contact the SafeCare Initiative in Amsterdam.

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The **SafeCare Initiative** has been **established by:**



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