

World Patient Safety Day

Each year on **17 September**, the global healthcare community marks World Patient Safety Day, the important awareness campaign. The RCSEd is one of the organisations at the forefront of promoting the message



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I am delighted to introduce the special feature section on patient safety in this edition of *Surgeons' News*. Since the College's inception, our focus has been on education, training, assessment and the maintenance of high professional standards to ensure patients receive high-quality, safe care. Our Patient Safety Group, ably chaired by Anna Paisley, is at the heart of our core college activity, and the guidance and initiatives it leads on ensure we remain focused on ensuring patient safety across all aspects of surgical and dental care.

To mark World Patient Safety Day the following series of articles highlights a number of these initiatives and activities. I am grateful for those who have provided contributions across a range of diagnostic, management and process endeavours.

In 2019, the WHO introduced World Patient Safety Day (WPSD), to be observed each year on 17 September. The slogan for the inaugural WPSD was 'Speak up for safety'. The overall objectives of the awareness day are to enhance global understanding of patient safety, increase public engagement in the safety of healthcare and promote global actions to enhance patient safety and reduce patient harm.

The origin of WPSD is grounded in the fundamental principle of medicine: 'First, do no harm.' The involvement of senior leadership at all levels is seen as essential to recognise the importance of patient safety in healthcare and improvement. WPSD continues to gain momentum year on year, and has attracted global promotion through media campaigns, stakeholder engagement, publications, symposia, awards, films, art events and pledges. Safety is promoted with the vibrant colour of orange, with a call for national monuments to be lit in orange.

From 2019, WPSD has continued with a priority theme: 2020 Health Worker Safety; 2021 Safe Maternal and Newborn Care; 2022 Medication Safety; and 2023 Engaging Patients for Safety.

During the Covid pandemic in 2020, the need to have 'safe health workers, safe patients' was highlighted as a necessity, as evidenced by many wellbeing campaigns.

As a recognised area of harm, 'Act now for safe and respectful childbirth' was the slogan for 2021. Following the WHO's third challenge with the aim of a 50% reduction in medication harm, 'Medication without harm' was the slogan for 2022. Last year, there was a call to 'Elevate the voice of patients' to be involved in their own care and help with the

development and design of healthcare systems. In support of the 2023 WSPD theme, the WHO published the world's first ever Patient Safety Charter, setting out 10 fundamental patients' safety rights in healthcare.

The WHO has selected 'Improving Diagnosis for Patient Safety' as this year's WPSD theme. It is recognised that 16% of preventable errors in healthcare are thought to be down to diagnostic error, with all adults experiencing this at least once in a lifetime.

Diagnostic safety is key to understanding symptoms and accessing correct and timely treatment for patients. Diagnostic safety errors can occur following delays in diagnoses, incorrect diagnoses, missed diagnoses and failure to communicate diagnoses with other healthcare staff and patients. While knowledge and competence are essential for healthcare staff to deliver diagnoses to patients, non-technical skills including situational awareness, decision making, communication and teamwork and leadership are also essential.

The Patient Safety Group at the College is delighted to share this feature in *Surgeons' News*, with articles aimed at highlighting the importance of diagnostic safety for patients and clinicians, as well as areas of patient safety work in which the College has been involved.

The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh continues to mark WPSD with the publication of blogs highlighting patient safety with the chosen priority themes. Last year, to 'Elevate the voice of patients', we published 14 blogs along with a number of talking heads – for this, we had a wide variety of contributors, including from our two patient safety representatives in the Patient Safety Group at the College.



Claire Morgan
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Globally, one in 10 patients experience harm from healthcare, with 12% resulting in permanent harm or death and 50% of those outcomes thought to be preventable. Patients most at risk live in low and middle-income countries and come from more vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, older patients and children. In addition, those at higher risk are patients being treated in highly specialised settings – ICU, emergency and surgery – and those managed in primary care.

To raise awareness of these issues, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed three patient safety challenges: 2005 Clean Care is Safer Care; 2008 Safe Surgery Saves Lives; and 2017 Medication Without Harm. The Safe Surgery Saves Lives campaign included the use of surgical safety checklists to improve perioperative safety (see page 28).