

WHPA: Strengthen the health workforce to improve patient safety

Geneva, Switzerland: 17 September 2026 — On World Patient Safety Day, the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA) is calling on governments and health partners to urgently strengthen the health workforce and health systems to protect people living with non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, oral diseases, and mental health conditions.

Safe patient care depends on a safe, supported and adequately staffed health workforce. Sufficient staffing levels, decent working conditions and meaningful support for health professionals' wellbeing are essential to reducing the risk of harm to both patients and those delivering care.

[World Patient Safety Day](#), marked by the World Health Organization (WHO) every year on 17 September, raises global awareness of patient safety and calls for urgent action to prevent avoidable harm.

[This year's theme](#), safe care for noncommunicable diseases under the slogan 'Safe care for life!', puts the spotlight on the need to make NCD care safer at every stage. A critical part of this effort is strengthening interprofessional collaboration so that people living with NCDs receive seamless, coordinated and safe care throughout their lives.

NCDs require long-term management across health promotion, prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. Health professionals across different disciplines and care settings must therefore work together and communicate effectively to ensure that people are not put at risk as they navigate complex care pathways. [WHPA's Statement on Interprofessional Collaborative Practice](#) provides guidance and recommendations endorsed by the global bodies representing over 47 million health professionals.

Greater investment in prevention and early detection of NCDs can reduce the severity of disease and the intensity of care required, thereby reducing opportunities for harm to occur. But health professionals cannot deliver this pre-emptive, person-centred care without the right systems and working conditions.

Health systems must urgently strengthen person-centred primary health care and enable multidisciplinary teams to work effectively and in closer collaboration with communities. When health professionals work together to deliver a broad range of coordinated services, they can improve continuity of care, align care pathways, provide more comprehensive services, increase efficiency and, critically, improve patient safety, health outcomes and patient satisfaction.

“Noncommunicable diseases claim 43 million lives a year and often require complex management, but too often health systems still intervene late, when people are already seriously ill and require hospital care. People do not want health conditions to define or disrupt their lives, nor should they have to rely on repeated hospital care when earlier, better support could help them stay well and independent. That is why strengthening the health workforce must be at the heart of the global NCD response.

Global health policy calls for an urgent move towards prevention, early detection, and person-centred primary health care at every stage of life, delivered by health professionals working together with meaningful patient and community engagement. Yet shortages, funding cuts and poor working conditions are still threatening health professionals’ ability to deliver safe, coordinated, preventive care at scale—and leaving the health workforce burned out and under strain,” said Howard Catton, CEO of the International Council of Nurses and Chair of the World Health Professions Alliance.

He continued: “We cannot achieve the outcomes that patients, policy makers and health professionals all want without urgently investing in the workforce. On World Patient Safety Day, our message is clear: protecting patients starts with protecting and enabling the health professionals who provide safe care for life.”

People living with NCDs need safe, coordinated care throughout their lives.

Note for Editors

The [World Health Professions Alliance \(WHPA\)](#) brings together the global organizations representing the world’s dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians and speaks for over 47 million health care professionals in more than 179 countries and territories. The WHPA works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders.

[World Patient Safety Day](#) is a WHO campaign that brings together governments, partners and communities to focus attention on patient safety and accelerate action to reduce avoidable harm in health care.

Press contact

Joannah Caborn Wengler, Manager of the WHPA Secretariat
jcwengler@whpa.org
+41 22 560 8147

[END]