

Medication Without Harm

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Received: 2023-03-09, Revised: 2023-03-19, Accepted: 2023-03-25, Published: 2023-03-31

J Pharm Care 2023; 11(1): 1.

Medication adverse events are the fourth to sixth cause of death in the United States of America, and the annual deaths due to medication complications and errors in this country are more than of the annual deaths from AIDS, breast cancer and high way accidents. Unsafe medication practices and medication errors are one of the main causes of harm and especially avoidable harm in health care systems worldwide. Globally, the cost of medication errors is estimated at \$42 billion annually. The scale and nature of this harms vary among low-, middle-, and high-income countries. Patients living in low-income countries suffer twice as much as patients living in high-income countries.

In response to this issue, in 2017, World Health Organization (WHO) introduced “safe medicine” as the subject of the third global patient safety challenge. Also, the theme of Patient Safety Day (September 17) last year (2022) was chosen and announced by WHO as “Medication Without Harm” and subsequently member countries were requested to increase their activities in this field. The aim of this challenge was to reduce severe avoidable medication-related harm by 50%, globally, in a 5 years’ period. This challenge was formally launched at the Second Global Ministerial Patient Safety Summit in Bonn, Germany on 29 March 2017. WHO calls for urgent action by countries for achieving Medication Without Harm. WHO has introduced four domains for this challenge including patients and the public, health care professionals, medicines and systems and practices of medication. There are also 16 subdomains related to these domains, mainly polypharmacy, high-risk situations and transitions of care.

This challenge requires the commitment of health ministers, health system leaders, and stakeholders including educational institutes, drug regulators, researchers, and pharmaceutical companies in order to achieve its main goal in the form of reducing the global amount of severe harm associated with pharmaceutical products. Health care professionals, including pharmacists, can improve medication safety by promoting patient engagement, team-working and a safety culture.

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PLEASE CITE THIS PAPER AS:

Shalviri G. Medication Without Harm. *J Pharm Care* 2023; 11(1): 1.

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