

Press release: Foreign Secretary to reaffirm UK's global commitment to patient safety

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will attend the Fourth Global Summit on Patient Safety in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on 2 March 2019. This year's Summit will focus on patient safety in low and middle income countries.

The conference will also allow the UK to further its objectives to improve global health, which include its current work with a range of other countries to pass a resolution on 'Global Action on Patient Safety' at the World Health Assembly in May 2019. The resolution will include calls for the establishment of World Patient Safety Day on September 17 annually.

The summit is the fourth to take place since the Foreign Secretary, then Health Secretary, established the initiative in 2016 in partnership with the then German health minister. The summit was launched with an aim to inspire international policy, galvanise global action and support the UK's objectives on patient safety at the World Health Assembly.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

I am thrilled to be a part of the Fourth Global Summit on Patient Safety in Jeddah and to demonstrate the UK's commitment to improving patient safety, particularly in low and middle income countries.

Patient safety has never been more important. 64 million life years are currently lost annually due to unsafe care around the world, making patient harm due to adverse events one of the top ten causes of death and disability, on a par with tuberculosis and malaria. In low and middle income countries, unsafe care causes 2.6 million deaths annually – but half of these could easily be prevented through simple mitigation strategies.

The UK is committed to driving positive change across the world to reduce the number of preventable deaths.

Background:

- The Patient Safety initiative aims to reduce the number of deaths in healthcare settings through improved technology, communication and awareness of hygiene and welfare standards, and is a priority area for the Foreign Secretary as a global expansion of his award-winning work as Health Secretary. (In February 2018 Jeremy Hunt received a Humanitarian Award for his work on Patient Safety).

- Worldwide there is a one in 300 chance of being harmed while accessing healthcare, compared with a one in 1 million chance of harm when travelling by plane.
- In high income countries one in 10 patients suffer while accessing care. In low and middle income countries, this number rises to one in four.
- Across the world, 7 million people a year suffer disabling surgical complications, from which more than 1 million die.
- Reducing patient safety incidents leads to better patient outcomes and significant financial savings. Focused safety improvements in the US led to an estimated saving of \$28 billion USD between 2010 and 2015.
- The 2017 and 2018 Summits were held in Bonn and Tokyo respectively and attended by 40+ countries. The Tokyo Summit resulted in the Tokyo Declaration on Patient Safety. The fifth summit will take place in Switzerland in 2020.