

**Power of humanity**  
Council of Delegates of the International  
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS  
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

**A Movement Approach to Ensuring Patient Safety  
and Quality of Care**

**Draft elements of resolution**

**Document prepared by  
the International Committee of the Red Cross and  
the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Geneva, March 2021

## Background

The draft elements of the proposed resolution “A Movement Approach to Ensuring Patient Safety and Quality of Care” seek to provide an outline of the possible substance of individual paragraphs, without providing a definitive draft text.

Each paragraph is followed by a rationale explaining why it would be useful to include such a paragraph in the resolution.

This document is being shared for consultation with the members of the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in order to gather a first round of comments and feedback and to gain an initial understanding of whether the proposed approach would be acceptable and garner consensus.

When providing comments and feedback on this document, please consider the following questions:

- Do you agree with the proposed elements for the preambular and operative paragraphs of the proposed resolution?
- Are there any elements that are missing or should be included in the resolution?

Detailed comments on the wording of the draft elements of this resolution are not expected at this stage. There will be an opportunity to comment on specific wording at a later stage, once the draft zero of the resolution is available.

## Introduction

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) is engaged in providing health-care services across the world. Ensuring and improving clinical health service quality and safety is an essential aspect of this work. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.8 aims to “[a]chieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all”.

The world is uniting around universal health coverage (UHC) as a common health goal, whereby every person receives the quality health services they need without suffering financial hardship.<sup>1</sup> As a result, leading health agencies across the globe (including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank) are endorsing UHC as the best strategy to attain the overall health SDG since achieving UHC allows countries to make the most of their strongest asset: people. A healthy population is fundamental to the success of a nation – without good health, children are unable to go to school and adults cannot work.

The concept of UHC is now considered to go beyond the three basic dimensions of population, services and costs, with an increasing focus being placed on ensuring a level of quality that helps to improve the health of each individual.<sup>2</sup> The true value of UHC to populations and governments depends on the quality of the health-care services provided. It is therefore necessary to ensure the consistent delivery of services that are safe and do not cause harm to patients.

Improving the quality of health care is complex. Good intentions alone cannot deliver high-quality care. Robust systems are required to support staff in reliably adhering to guidelines and processes in order to ensure high-quality, safe care. Ongoing tensions between the

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<sup>1</sup> WHO, [Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030](#)

<sup>2</sup> P. Barker, “Making universal health coverage whole: Adding quality as the fourth dimension”, Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2016

pursuit of quality and other health-care priorities in a world of finite resources mean that achieving a safe balance between risks and resources requires constant vigilance and quality systems to support staff in achieving this goal.

The resolution on addressing patient safety and quality of care calls upon the Movement to strengthen commitment to meeting increasing global demands to guarantee and improve the safety and quality of health care provided to affected and vulnerable people, as a consequence of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies such as pandemics.

Furthermore, the resolution calls for the development of a joint Movement-wide policy on patient safety and quality of care which will define, harmonize and standardize approaches adopted to ensure the delivery of safe, quality care for the people we serve.

The overall purpose of the resolution and the subsequent Movement policy is to strengthen collaboration within the Movement in order to align with global initiatives of critical importance, notably the Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2023 developed by WHO to respond to the vision of “[a] world in which no one is harmed in health care and every patient receives safe and respectful care, every time, everywhere”.<sup>3</sup>

### **Preambular paragraphs (PP)**

**PP 1:** The first preambular paragraph of this resolution could acknowledge that patient safety is a critical element of delivering quality health care worldwide. More specifically, it would state the need to address patient safety and quality of care as a global priority, recalling two resolutions adopted by WHO “Quality of care: patient safety” and “Global action on patient safety”.

**Rationale:** Data shows that health care suffers from a lack of quality in most global settings and across many domains, and this low quality of care results in ongoing damage to human health. Between 5.7 and 8.4 million deaths occur annually due to poor quality of care in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>4</sup> Ensuring the delivery of quality health services will increase the likelihood of achieving desired health outcomes and the resulting benefits for patients, families, communities and economies. The leaders of the Movement are stewards of a global treasure: delivery of the highest standard and quality of humanitarian health care.

Never before has it been more vital to focus on ensuring the delivery of quality, safe health care. Patient safety remains a critical global public health issue and has a widely accepted role in enabling health systems to achieve effective UHC.

**PP 2:** This preambular paragraph could stress the need to highlight the growing challenge of ensuring patient safety and quality of care, recognizing that unsafe health care causes a significant level of avoidable patient harm and human suffering and leads to an increase in the cost of care and a loss of trust in the health services delivered by the Movement. Ultimately, this puts the reputation of the components of the Movement at risk.

**Rationale:** The Movement is engaged in providing health-care services across the world, and ensuring and improving the quality and safety of clinical health responses must be an essential aspect of this work. However, the lack of common approaches to this issue

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<sup>3</sup> WHO, [Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030](#)

<sup>4</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2018. *Crossing the Global Quality Chasm: Improving Health Care Worldwide*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press (<https://doi.org/10.17226/25152>)

means that, today, each component of the Movement has a different approach to defining and managing the quality of health care, which poses a significant challenge.

**PP 3:** This preambular paragraph could acknowledge the Movement's existing commitments to strengthening accountability to and engagement with vulnerable and affected people, such as the Accountability to Affected People Institutional Framework and the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

**Rationale:** Patient safety cannot be ensured without the responsible use of resources by health-care providers, combined with recognition of the dignity and capacity of individuals and communities and their ability to be independent.

**PP 4:** This preambular paragraph could emphasize the need to develop strategies and policies to support and improve the quality of clinical care and patient safety using a Movement-wide approach that aims to reach agreed objectives, placing patients and communities at the centre of their care.

**Rationale:** Worldwide, there is an agreed need to address the gap between the intended standards and the actual quality of clinical care delivered on the ground. A common approach, including systems to support staff in delivering safe, quality care, is needed across the Movement to ensure we are not harming the very people we serve.

**PP 5:** This preambular paragraph could affirm the need to streamline practices and implement safety and quality programmes, initiatives and activities in a seamless way. This would involve, for example, creating a Movement-wide culture of patient safety, adopting consistent approaches for the monitoring of agreed quality indicators, critical incident reviews and management of adverse events and using standardized tools across the Movement.

**Rationale:** This paragraph recognizes that the Movement is increasingly finding itself working in partnership across different organizations, and this is creating a growing willingness and desire to harmonize the different tools that are used to monitor patient safety and quality of care, with a view to ensuring a shared understanding, analysis and handling of the quality agenda.

### **Operative paragraphs (OP)**

The following operative paragraphs would emphasize the need to raise the profile of patient safety and quality of care using a Movement-wide approach with patients and communities at the centre.

**OP 1:** This paragraph could call on the Movement to commit to a strengthened approach to ensuring and improving the safety and quality of the health care it provides, with a view to harmonizing and standardizing the Movement's approach to addressing patient safety and quality of care for the population that it serves. This includes a commitment to increasing efforts to better understand needs and challenges and to collecting evidence in humanitarian responses, including by integrating longer-term research into monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

**Rationale:** Creating a shared vision for the reliable delivery of quality health care is fundamental to raising the profile of the importance of focusing on patient safety and quality of care in clinical health-care delivery across the Movement. Leadership engagement across the Movement is vital to drive and support this work.

**OP2:** This operative paragraph could call on the Movement to establish a Movement Reference Group (MRG) to draft, discuss, advise on and make strategic recommendations for the improvement of patient safety and quality of care in the Movement, building on the expertise of National Societies that are advanced in this field.

**Rationale:** The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and all National Societies need to come together to support efforts to strengthen the Movement's capacity to engage with and be accountable for the delivery of quality, safe clinical care. This collective agreement is required to ensure that commitments are understood, implemented, monitored and reported on across the Movement.

**OP 3:** This operative paragraph could commit the Movement, through the MRG, to developing a set of commitments intended to strengthen global actions on quality of care and patient safety and to creating a Movement-wide policy for presentation and adoption at the next Council of Delegates in 2023, which could be noted at the 34th International Conference.

**Rationale:** The adoption of commitments by the Council of Delegates would ensure that this work achieves the high profile it needs to keep the focus on this issue in health-care delivery. There is a need to demonstrate mutual accountability across the Movement to implement these commitments once they are adopted, to share lessons learnt and to consolidate and scale up best practices in order to better support the delivery of quality, safe health-care services.

**OP 4:** This operative paragraph could request all Movement bodies to work together to reduce duplication of their approaches and increase collaboration in order to strengthen individual and collective capacities. Movement bodies should ensure that commitments and resulting actions are integrated into organizational policies and processes.

**Rationale:** There is a need to establish a common understanding and guarantee the effective implementation of this collaboration and resulting actions in order to deliver the best response possible.

**OP 5:** The MRG would encourage all bodies to pledge to deliver these future Movement-wide commitments and dedicate adequate human, financial and technical resources to achieving them.

**Rationale:** It is vital to have the necessary leadership and resources in place to ensure the delivery across all Movement bodies. Formal Movement-wide commitments will keep the focus on this vital work.