Our Call for a Safer Health Care in Spain

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the citizens and patients of Spain, we thank you for adopting the WHA 72.6 Resolution at the 72nd World Health Assembly in Geneva on May 28, 2019 under item 12.5 of the Agenda on Global Action on Patient Safety.

We look forward to the implementation of the commitments made under the WHA Resolution in Spain and to the acknowledgement of patient safety as a priority in all policies and programs in the health sector. Harm to patients is the 14th leading cause of global morbidity and a clear threat to human health. On any given day, at least one out of 18 patients in European hospitals gets an infection acquired within the healthcare system. In Europe, 1 in 10 hospitalized patients have experienced negligence during their care. These damages are largely preventable.

Statistical projections show that effective strategies to reduce the rate of adverse events in the European Union could lead to the prevention of more than 750,000 medical errors, which in turn would lead to over 3.2 million fewer days of hospitalization, as well as 260,000 fewer incidents of permanent disability and 95,000 fewer deaths per year.

To raise awareness about patient safety and advocate for safer health care systems throughout Europe, Health First Europe, with the support of the Spanish Patient Forum, launched its Declaration for Patient Safety asking health authorities, politicians, health professionals, healthcare providers and patients to join us in our efforts to avoid unnecessary harm, by promoting safer health systems and higher quality standards for patient safety throughout Europe.

Therefore, we call you to:

- Provide smarter and safer medical care systems: new technologies, such as electronic patient records, health cards and electronic prescriptions are already in use in Spain, however the technology allowing the traceability of medicines aiming at reducing medication errors\(^1\) is still in the process of implementation.

- Establish a national surveillance system and provide the National Plan against Antibiotic Resistance (PRAN) with resources to address infections healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). In Spain alone, HAIs cause more than 3,000 deaths and cost up to 1 million euros annually for each hospital, along with the threat posed by antimicrobial resistance.

- Establish legal bases, which integrate and implement patient safety strategies in all clinical programs and risk areas, as appropriate, to avoid unnecessary damage to medical care procedures, medication safety, surgical safety, infection control, management of sepsis, diagnostic safety, environmental hygiene and infrastructure, as well as to minimize the risk of inaccurate or late diagnoses and treatments, and pay special attention to groups at risk.

For more information about our calls for action on patient safety, we invite you to visit: [http://declaration4patientsafety.eu/](http://declaration4patientsafety.eu/), read the Declaration, and participate in our social media campaign #Declaration4PatientSafety

Yours sincerely,

Roberto Bertollini, Health First Europe, President
Andoni Lorenzo, Foro Español de Pacientes, President

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\(^1\) Medication errors cause 5% of hospitalizations in Spain and an annual cost of 1.7 billion euros.