



## EDİTÖRE MEKTUP / LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Improving the access to water, sanitation and hygiene services in health care facilities

Sağlık tesislerinde su, sanitasyon ve hijyen hizmetlerine erişimin iyileştirilmesi

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To the Editor,

The general notion of going to a health care facility is to get well or to avail services like family planning, immunization or treatment of diseases<sup>1</sup>. It is quite obvious that nobody goes to a health care facility to become sick, but still millions of people are prone to acquire the hospital-induced infections owing to the lack of basic services, including water, sanitation, hygiene, health care waste and cleaning (WASH) services<sup>2</sup>. In-fact, the available global estimates reflect that close to 900 million and 1.5 billion people avail services from those health facilities with no water or access to sanitation services respectively<sup>1</sup>.

Further, it has been concluded that the WASH services are below standard in all the regions of the world<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it is important to note that such circumstances not only enhances the incidence of infections, caseload, burden on the health system, but also is a crucial factor for the rise in the number of multi-drug resistant infections and even compromises the safety and dignity of the patients<sup>1-3</sup>. There are no second thoughts that a child born in a health facility with poor WASH standards is at immense risk of acquiring the Infection & death, and the same applies to the mother as well<sup>2,3</sup>.

If we aim to attain the universal health coverage, WASH is an essential and integral component, and the present status depicts an unacceptable health risk exposing millions of people to an unhealthy and unsafe world<sup>2</sup>. In order to improve the existing

scenario, a series of steps have been proposed with an aim to formulate national plans, set targets, upgrade infrastructure and involve local communities<sup>3,4</sup>. The first and foremost step is to perform a situation analysis (pertaining to existing policies, financial support, etc.) & assessment about the coverage of WASH services and this information can be utilized for mobilization of resources and prioritization<sup>2-4</sup>.

This has to be followed by the setting-up of the feasible targets and laying out of the roadmap, which should contain explicit information about the roles & responsibilities of the involved stakeholders and the budgetary provisions<sup>3,5</sup>. Subsequently, national standards and accountability mechanisms have to be framed and this has to be done simultaneously with the improvement of the existing infrastructure<sup>2,3</sup>. In order to enhance the accountability, different quality indices can be merged with the routine process of the data collection and it will aid in having a clear idea about the gains made<sup>3,4</sup>.

Further, capacity building activities have also to be strengthened to ensure that all the cadres of health professionals are empowered with the recent information on WASH and infection prevention & control activities<sup>1</sup>. Further, it is very important to realize that we won't be able to make sustainable progress unless the local communities are also engaged in these initiatives and their inputs are also sought while the formulation of policies<sup>2,3</sup>. In addition, a specific amount of financial support

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should also be allocated towards the conduction of operational research and for the promotion of learning<sup>4</sup>.

In conclusion, the problem of ensuring universal access to WASH services in health settings can be addressed provided we all are committed in our actions and work together and support the same with better monitoring and involvement of the communities.

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