

## 2. Fostering quality in health services

The quality and safety of health services delivered at the individual and population levels are fundamental to UHC. WHO has helped to focus the attention of policy-makers on strengthening regulations and the regulatory environment and engaging individuals, families and communities in co-producing health. This has been achieved through technical support to advance quality policy development and institutional capacity-building.

Discussions at the Policy Roundtable on Quality in Health Services in Hong Kong SAR (China) in September 2015, advanced patient safety and quality policy development. Outcomes included:

- Establishing regulations for quality in health services through legislation, licensing and registration of health practitioners and accreditation of health facilities, with a focus on sustaining and improving professional standards and identifying and addressing poor practices.
- Setting up adverse event reporting and monitoring systems beyond institutional levels to foster a culture of open reporting in a non-punitive and safe environment.
- Developing clinical guidelines and professional standards, which requires significant investments of expertise, time and resources, in coordination with partners.
- Using financial incentives to improve quality, which can act as a driver for regulation and accreditation, needs to

be exercised with caution to prevent unintended consequences.

Recognizing that countries are at different stages of development, WHO held individual follow-up discussions with countries – including Cambodia, China, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mongolia, the Philippines and Viet Nam – regarding their action plans. These policy discussions continued in Malaysia in December 2015 at a biregional meeting organized by WHO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A side event on Patients for

Patient Safety, a WHO global initiative pioneered in Malaysia, was a highlight of this event and an eye-opener for many participants.

Finally, to foster institutional capacity-building, the Third Hospital Quality and Patient Safety Management Course in Japan in March 2016 was a successful team effort, including WHO collaborating centres from Japan and other countries. The course strengthened leadership and technical capacity for hospital quality and patient safety management and created an informal network of change agents. ■



A health worker interacts with patients at Khanh Vinh District Hospital in Viet Nam. A skilled health workforce is essential to ensuring responsive, quality health services.