



HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTH CARE: ADVOCACY PACK

GLOBAL HANDWASHING PARTNERSHIP

MARCH 2019

About the Advocacy Pack

Advocates have a crucial role in ensuring hand hygiene is prioritized in country and district-level policies and budgets; as well as by health system leaders, health workers, and healthcare associations. This advocacy pack was developed to support you in planning and conducting advocacy activities to accelerate hand hygiene efforts in your own country or region.

This advocacy pack was developed by the Global Handwashing Partnership, an international coalition of stakeholders who work to promote handwashing as a fundamental component to health and development. It is part of a larger advocacy campaign to promote better hand hygiene in healthcare settings. The objectives of this advocacy pack are to:

- Inform on the impact, current practice, and strategies for hand hygiene in healthcare facilities
- Provide tools and templates for hand hygiene advocacy
- Provide key messages for advocates to amplify the message of proper hand hygiene in healthcare facilities

This pack consists of evidence-based materials for advocates to use for both advocacy planning and communication efforts to engage decision makers. It includes:

- Advocacy Brief – provides vital background information on why hand hygiene in healthcare facilities is crucial and gives key calls to actions for target groups
- Infographic – provides a visual image of key statistics and shares practical steps to support hand hygiene in healthcare facilities
- Social Media Toolkit – provides samples messages and graphics to use on social media platforms
- Data Sheet – provides key data that can be used when discussing the importance of hand hygiene in healthcare settings
- Laser Talking Points and Template – provides examples and a template for effective pitches on hand hygiene to your target audience

This advocacy pack serves as a useful starting point for your hand hygiene advocacy work. We encourage you to adapt the messages and templates in this pack to fit your audience. By including relevant information, adding your own voice, and linking messages to your audience's priorities, you will make your argument much stronger.

Below are some other resources that could be helpful in planning your hand hygiene advocacy activities:

- [Clean Hands for All: A toolkit for hygiene advocacy](#) – includes tools and resources to help hygiene advocates ensure handwashing with soap is recognized
- [Clean Hands Count campaign page](#) – aims to improve healthcare provider adherences to hand hygiene recommendations and address the myths and misperceptions of hand hygiene
- [WHO Save Lives, Clean Your Hands campaign page](#) – aims to support healthcare workers to improve hand hygiene in healthcare settings
- [UNICEF Advocacy Toolkit](#) - toolkit developed to help plan and conduct advocacy activities
- [WHO/UNICEF](#) Joint Monitoring Program – global data and reports on progress towards SDG 6

Key Terms and Definitions

5 Key Moments for Hand Hygiene: An approach defined by the World Health Organization that identifies when health workers should perform hand hygiene. This includes before patient contact, before an aseptic task, after body fluid exposure risk, after patient contact, and after contact with patient surroundings

Advocacy: The process in which an individual or group raises public support and influences decision makers to support a specific topic or policy

Antiseptic Handrub: An alcohol-based liquid used to decrease infectious germs on the hands

Call to Action: A targeted statement used to prompt an immediate response or encourage a specific action from the audience related to a topic or policy

Hand Hygiene: The act of cleaning one's hands through either handwashing with soap or using an antiseptic handrub

Healthcare-associated infection: An infection that is transmitted to an individual while they are receiving health care for another condition

Laser Talk: A short, focused pitch to inform someone on a particular issue, typically used to convince them to take an action

Sepsis: A condition that results from the body's response to the presence of harmful organisms, potentially leading to organ malfunction, shock, or death

Acknowledgements

This advocacy pack was prepared by Carolyn Moore and Aarin Palomares of the Global Handwashing Partnership Secretariat.

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For more information on hand hygiene advocacy, please visit www.globalhandwashing.org.

Hand Hygiene – Vital for quality healthcare

With clean hands, health workers can offer clean and safe care, and protect themselves and their patients from infection. Globally, healthcare-associated infections affect more than 1 million people at any given time.¹ Hand hygiene is a highly effective way to prevent infection, but it is estimated that only 40% of health workers practice correct hand hygiene.²

In healthcare settings, hand hygiene refers to handwashing with soap or using an antiseptic handrub at the five critical times identified by the World Health Organization. Proper hand hygiene requires appropriate supplies, practice, and leadership. With these key elements in place, health workers and patients would have dramatically lower risks of infection, and healthcare costs could drop dramatically.

Impact of hand hygiene

Poor hand hygiene can lead to a range of health problems, including healthcare-associated infections and sepsis. Healthcare-associated infections often occur when germs are transferred from a healthcare worker's hands to a patient. On average, approximately 15% of patients in developing countries and 7% of patients in developed countries are affected by healthcare-associated infections.^{3,4} Health workers and staff are also at risk of acquiring infections.

Every year, healthcare-associated infections adversely affect patient quality of care, cause longer hospital stays, create disabilities, and increase the risk of antimicrobial resistance among patients.^{4,5} These infections can also trigger sepsis and septic shock, which particularly affect vulnerable populations such as newborns and people who are already sick.⁶ Sepsis accounts for approximately 6 million deaths every year and is a common cause of maternal and neonatal deaths.^{7,8}

Research shows that simple, cost-effective infection prevention and control measures, such as appropriate hand hygiene practices, can reduce health care-associated infections by more than 50%.⁹ These changes would save some countries over \$28 billion annually.⁹ Health systems with poor hand hygiene compliance need more resources to care for patients who have infections, many of whom must stay in hospitals for longer periods of time. Poor hand hygiene also compromises health workers' ability to offer safe services, exposes them to a higher risk of infection, and limits patients' confidence in health systems.

Current practice and barriers to hand hygiene

The World Health Organization recommends five critical moments in which all health workers and staff must wash or disinfect their hands: before patient contact, before an aseptic task, after body fluid exposure risk, after patient contact, and after contact with patient surroundings.³ These critical moments appear in any healthcare setting and are not limited to hospitals or clinics. Healthcare leaders in all settings must prioritize strategies to improve hand hygiene during these critical moments.

Currently, 61% of health workers do not comply with best handwashing practices.² This low compliance rate is due to various factors, which can include lack of infrastructure, cultural norms, or lack of knowledge.¹⁰ Motivations for or against hand hygiene can vary by context. Strategies to improve hand hygiene must address the most relevant factors in a given context, as well as influencing overall behavior and organizational norms to improve hand hygiene.

A 2018 study found that 66% of health facilities in low- and middle-income countries lack soap and piped water for handwashing.¹¹ There is an urgent need to ensure that soap, water, and handrub are available in every health facility worldwide. However, infrastructure alone is typically not enough to ensure good hand hygiene behavior. Poor hand hygiene practices persist in high-income countries and in settings with proper infrastructure and supplies.

Strategies to improve hand hygiene

Existing tools and strategies have been effective in improving hand hygiene. For example, the World Health Organization Multimodal Hand Hygiene Improvement Strategy¹² outlines a series of steps a facility can take, including: setting appropriate policies, implementing training and education programs, establishing staff feedback mechanisms for increased accountability, and using visual nudges to encourage staff members to wash their hands during critical moments.¹³ An infection prevention and control strategy is another practical solution that healthcare leaders can use to prevent infection in their facilities.^{14,15}

Healthcare leaders should ensure specific infection prevention and control policies are in place; provide and maintain the supplies and infrastructure needed to practice good hand hygiene; and promote training and accountability for all staff to ensure compliance. Training and information are essential components of strategies to change hand hygiene behavior, but knowledge alone will not lead to improved practices. Strategies to change behavior should respond to health workers' motivations and must include methods to ensure accountability.

Improving hand hygiene is not only the responsibility of health workers and healthcare leaders. Hand hygiene also requires a supportive enabling environment. This includes improvements in policy, funding, and strategy to ensure hand hygiene is prioritized, and improvements in hand hygiene are recognized. Policy makers have an important role to play in ensuring good hand hygiene is possible, and promoted, in all healthcare settings.

Calls to action

Proper hand hygiene must be prioritized by leaders and staff in all healthcare facilities to ensure quality of care, reduce the spread of infections, and protect staff and patients. It must also be included in the investments, policies, and strategies that make this possible. Health workers and patients have an important role to play by practicing and advocating for proper hand hygiene during critical moments of care.

Here are some priority actions you can take to promote and improve hand hygiene:

Governments: Invest in critical infrastructure for water, sanitation, and hygiene in health facilities. Include hand hygiene in policies, requirements, and monitoring for quality health care.

Businesses and donors: Invest in behavior change, infrastructure, and supplies. Recognize the vital role of hand hygiene in the success of any health facility.

Health facility leaders: Ensure availability of hand hygiene supplies and infrastructure. Monitor hand hygiene and ensure all staff are accountable for their performance of hand hygiene. Demonstrate leadership commitment to hand hygiene.

Advocates and associations: Advocate for hand hygiene infrastructure, programming, and monitoring as an essential part of keeping health workers and patients safe.

Health workers and patients: Clean your hands at critical times. Remind all staff, patients, and visitors to clean their hands at key moments.

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- ¹⁵ Storr et al. (2017). Core components for effective infection prevention and control programmes: New WHO evidence-based recommendations. *Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control*, 6(6). doi: [10.1186/s13756-016-0149-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s13756-016-0149-9)

Hand Hygiene Laser Talks

A laser talk is a short, compelling pitch that serves as a useful starting point for your hand hygiene advocacy work. These can be used any time you need to convince someone to take an action to improve hand hygiene. The acronym, **EPIC**, can help you remember the basics of delivering a compelling talk to your target audience. The letters stand for **Engage** your audience, state the **Problem**, **Inform** on the solution, and give the **Call** to action.¹

- **E** for engage your audience – This is the hook to your pitch. You want to get your listener’s attention with a dramatic fact or short statement.
- **P** for state the problem – This is where you introduce the problem. Include information on what causes the problem, and how widespread it is.
- **I** for inform on the solution – This is where you inform your listener about your proposed solution to the problem and give examples of prior commitments or successful approaches.
- **C** for call to action – This is the closing to your pitch and wraps up all of your previous points into one actionable request for the listener.

While this model serves as a great starting point, be sure to follow up with more information and evidence supporting your points. Adapt your laser talk to reflect your own experiences and the information that will be most relevant to your audience. Below are some examples of effective laser talks you can use to promote hand hygiene:

Potential Funder

Goal: To convince a potential funder to support a new hand hygiene initiative

Engage: Hand hygiene is the best infection and prevention control measure a facility can take. Healthcare-associated infections can create a major health and economic burden for health facilities due to longer hospital stays, shortage supplies, and losses in staff productivity.

Problem: Globally, 61% of health workers do not comply with best handwashing practices. This is often because handwashing facilities are either not available or workers are not set up for success to prevent infections. [Our facility has high rates of (health care-associated infections/sepsis, etc.), which limits our ability to provide our patients with the best possible care.]

Inform: Last year, the UN Secretary-General issued a global call to action on water, sanitation, and hygiene in healthcare facilities. Many country governments, development organizations, and funders have since stepped up to increase advocacy around proper hand hygiene. Proper infrastructure and knowledge programs are necessary to ensure this call is met. The safety of our patients and healthcare workers is important. With a comprehensive plan, we can ensure lower rates of healthcare-associated infections through better hand hygiene.

¹ The EPIC acronym was originally created by RESULTS. To learn more about EPIC and how to create an effective laser talk, visit www.results.org

Call to action: Your investment would allow us to develop and implement appropriate accountability and behavior change programs to improve hand hygiene in our facility/district. Will you help fund these initiatives to promote hand hygiene in healthcare facilities?

Considerations:

- Research successful hand hygiene programs that can be good examples for this funder.
- Look at the types of projects this funder has previously funded. How will this initiative fit within this funder's portfolio and objectives?
- Describe what you would do to improve hand hygiene with this funding, and how you will measure and evaluate your program to ensure it is meeting its goals.

Government Official

Goal: To convince your official to include hand hygiene improvement efforts into a new health policy

Engage: I recently learned that healthcare-associated infections can cause a major burden to patient and health worker safety. Did you know healthcare-associated infections affect almost 1.5 million people at any given time?

Problem: Healthcare-associated infections are often spread through the hands of health workers and their patients. Proper hand hygiene is a highly effective way to prevent these infections and ensure the safety of everyone in a healthcare setting. Yet, globally, 61% of health workers do not comply with proper handwashing practices. [In our country, __% of patients are affected by health care-associated infections due to low hand hygiene compliance. Patients in our district also suffer from high rates of (infections/sepsis/antimicrobial resistance, etc.)]

Inform: Last year, the UN Secretary-General issued a global call to action on water, sanitation, and hygiene in healthcare facilities. A majority of healthcare-associated infections could be prevented if all health workers simply washed their hands or used handrub at 5 key times before, during, and after patient contact. If we don't prioritize proper hand hygiene through our policies and strategies, we can never provide the best care for patients.

Call to Action: You can help our district/country prevent healthcare-associated infections and its consequences by prioritizing hand hygiene in our district/country policies and strategies moving forward. Will you ensure hand hygiene is a priority in our patient safety agenda? [Include a specific policy recommendation when possible]

Considerations:

- Localize the problem by utilizing available data or collecting baseline data if possible.
- Look at what policies are already in place on a national level and see where hand hygiene fits in/how often it is mentioned in current health agendas; or where the gaps are. Policies should be in place for hand hygiene supplies, infrastructure, and practice.
- What objectives would you like to meet with this hand hygiene policy? (ex. ensure x number of handwashing stations in all facilities.)

Hospital Administrator

Goal: To encourage your hospital administrator to allocate funding for hand hygiene supplies and infrastructure; and pass a hand hygiene policy

Engage: I've noticed that our facility experiences high rates of healthcare-associated infections. As a facility, our job is to protect the safety of our patients and workers.

Problem: Healthcare-associated infections are a major cause of death and disability worldwide. [Our facility has higher than average rates of (newborn sepsis/extended patient stays/etc.)]. As a health worker, it is difficult for me to practice proper hand hygiene without accessible antiseptic handrub or handwashing stations, which can lead to these preventable adverse outcomes. There is also no official policy on hand hygiene, so some staff don't feel accountable for cleaning their hands.

Inform: These infections can be alleviated by ensuring all of our staff practice proper hand hygiene at 5 key times before, during, and after patient contact. With better hand hygiene, we will see better patients outcomes and lower costs. If we don't prioritize hand hygiene practices on a facility level, our patients will continue to suffer from preventable infections.

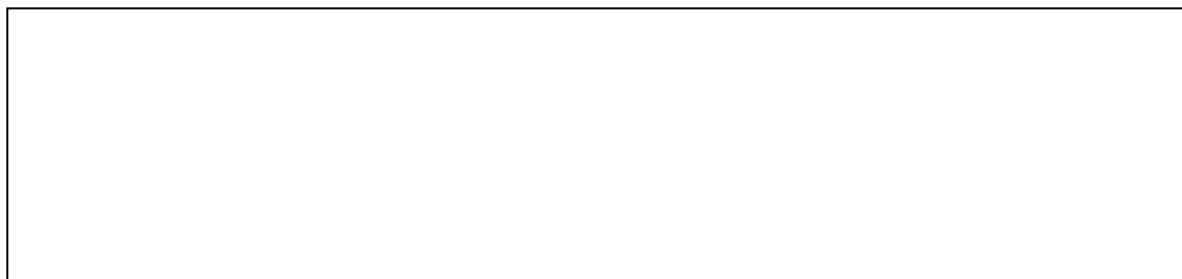
Call to action: Our facility has a reputation for providing the best care in the area, and we want to protect that reputation by showing our patients we are committed to preventing infection. We must take action to improve hand hygiene in our facility. Will you allocate funding to ensure there is handrub available for all staff? Additionally, will you commit to passing a policy that all staff are required to clean their hands at critical times?

Considerations:

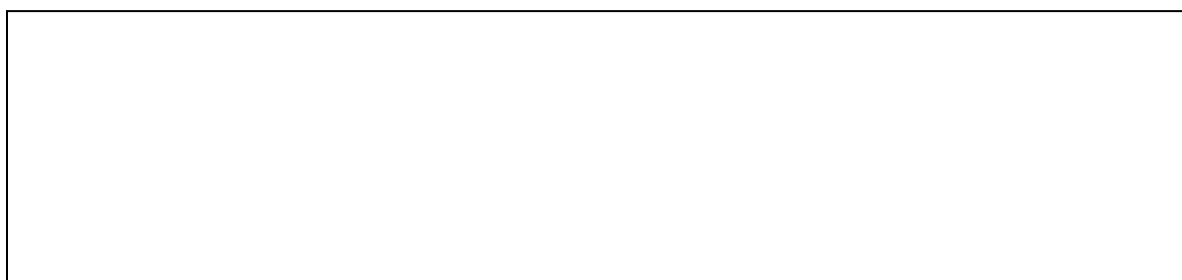
- How would your facility benefit from improved hand hygiene? (Better patient and staff morale, improved reputation, costs saved, etc.)
- What is the root cause of poor handwashing compliance at your facility?
- What burdens are caused by lack of handwashing compliance at your facility? (high rates of healthcare-associated infections or sepsis, prolonged stays, high readmission rates)
- What types of initiatives would be best to encourage compliance with infection prevention measures among staff? (Motivational programs, administrative measures, training programs, combination)
- Who is the best person to implement these initiatives? Who should you be pitching to?

Laser talk template: Use this worksheet to plan your own laser talk using the EIPC model.

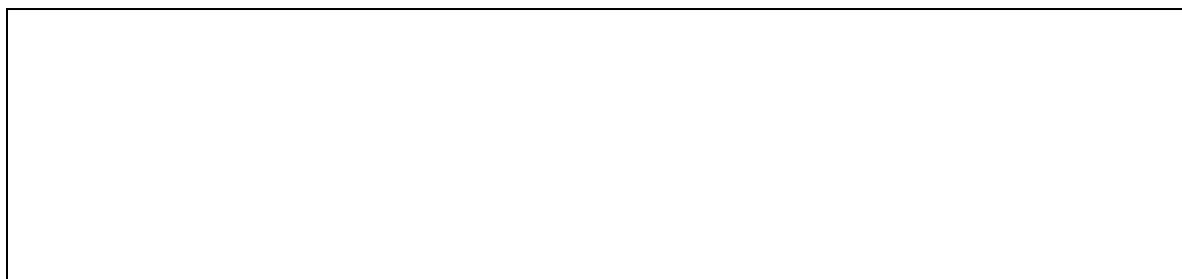
Engage your audience



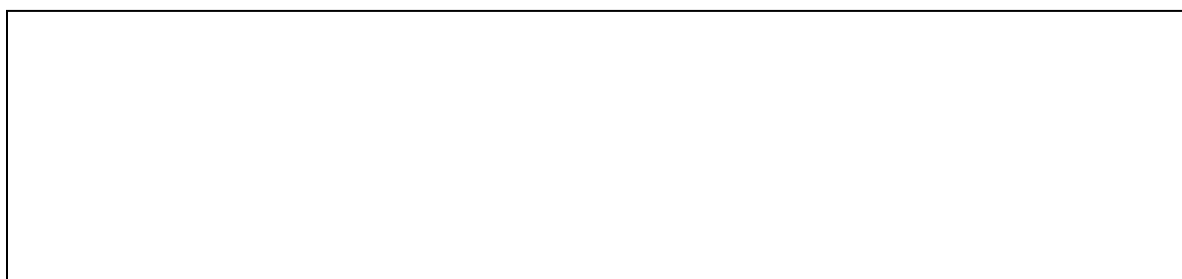
State the problem



Inform on the solution



Call to action



Hand Hygiene Data Points

Use data to convince your audience of the importance of hand hygiene. This sheet lists some of the key data you can include in your hand hygiene advocacy work.

Healthcare-associated infections

- Globally, healthcare-associated infections affect **more than 1 million** people at any given time.¹⁶
- Healthcare-associated infections affect **15%** of patients in developing countries, and about **7%** of patients in developed countries.^{17,18}
- Every year, antimicrobial resistance leads to around **700,000** deaths.¹⁹
- Sepsis accounts for approximately **6 million** deaths every year.²⁰
- Globally, sepsis is the **third most common** cause of maternal mortality, and up to **56%** of neonatal deaths among babies born in hospitals are due to infection in developing countries.^{21, 22}
- Infections, including sepsis, led to nearly **400,000** newborn deaths in 2016 alone, accounting for **15%** of newborn mortality.²³

Potential of improved hand hygiene

- Infection prevention and control measures, such as appropriate hand hygiene practices, can reduce health care-associated infections by more than **50%**.²⁴
- HCAs can increase length of stay in hospitals by **5 to nearly 30** days for patients who develop infections during hospital stays.²⁵
- These changes would save some countries over **\$28 billion** annually.²⁴

Hand hygiene practice

- Hand hygiene is a highly effective way to prevent infection, but it is estimated that only **40%** of health workers practice correct hand hygiene.²²
- In some facilities, up to **90%** of staff do not adhere to best practices, even when supplies are available.²²

Water, sanitation, and hygiene in health facilities

- A study of healthcare facilities in 54 countries found that **35%** failed to offer soap and water for handwashing.²⁶
- A 2018 study found that **66%** of health facilities in low- and middle-income countries lack soap and piped water for handwashing.²⁷
- **Only 2%** of health facilities provided sufficient water, sanitation, hygiene, and waste management services.²⁷

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HAND HYGIENE IN HEALTH CARE: SAMPLE MESSAGES



Social Media Messages

The Global Handwashing Partnership and other advocates aim to build demand and amplify the message on the importance of hand hygiene in healthcare settings. Social media is a great way to start a discussion and promote messages or calls to actions for hand hygiene in healthcare facilities. This toolkit includes messages that advocates can share on Twitter, Facebook, and other platforms.

We encourage you to tailor these messages to suit your audience and context. You may adapt, translate, or reword these sample messages to meet your needs. Encourage others, especially those who work in health care, to share these messages as well. For more information on planning and conducting advocacy activities, visit www.globalhandwashing.org.

Twitter

These tweets can be promoted on your organizational or personal account. Makes these tweets your own by linking to your website, using the provided graphics, or tagging your policy makers. Additionally, they can be adapted for text messages, WhatsApp groups, and so on. Follow @HandwashingSoap on Twitter for updates on hand hygiene in healthcare facilities.

Sample Messages

Calling all healthcare leaders! It is our duty to keep our patients safe and free of preventable infections. Proper hand hygiene reduces the spread of infection in a healthcare setting. Commit to providing safe care for all patients by practicing proper hand hygiene.

To reduce infections, hand hygiene must be practiced at critical times in all healthcare settings. [@Policymaker handle], will you commit to investing in #WASH infrastructure in health facilities?

Support the pledge to quality care! Hand hygiene is an essential part of ensuring the safety of both patients and health workers. Raise your voice for clean hands in healthcare settings.

#DYK hands are a main way in which germs are spread during health care? Dirty hands can increase the risk of healthcare-associated infections. Hold your healthcare provider accountable and remind them to wash their hands!

#DYK 35% of health facilities in developing countries lack access to soap and water? Raise your voice for hand hygiene infrastructure at your health facility to ensure quality care for all.

Proper hand hygiene is a proven way to prevent the spread of infections. Yet, only 41% of healthcare workers actually practice proper hand hygiene. Hold your healthcare provider accountable for proper hand hygiene!

Facebook

These posts can be used to promote hand hygiene in healthcare facilities from your personal or organizational page. Be sure to adapt these to your context and audience. These can also be used on LinkedIn or web sites.

Sample Messages

#DYK Proper hand hygiene can protect both health workers and patients in healthcare settings? The simple, yet vital act of washing your hands with soap or using an antiseptic handrub can reduce healthcare-associated infections and other diseases caused by dirty hands. Raise your voice for hand hygiene in healthcare settings; it's an essential part of quality and safe care!

Which tools can help health workers improve quality of care, reduce risk of infections, and prevent disease? Soap and water! Everyone deserves access to clean and safe care, but 66% of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries lack soap and piped water for handwashing. Learn how you can advocate for proper hand hygiene at www.globalhandwashing.org

Calling all healthcare leaders! Take the pledge to ensure quality care. It is our duty to keep our patients safe and free of preventable infections. By practicing proper hand hygiene, we can do just that. Our clean hands help reduce the spread of infections in healthcare settings. Commit to providing safe care for all of your patients by prioritizing hand hygiene in policies and holding others accountable for proper hand hygiene.

How can we make sure everyone benefits from proper hand hygiene in healthcare facilities? Ensuring access to hygiene infrastructure, such as handwashing stations with soap and water, is only the first step. Behavior change is also essential for making hand hygiene a habit at critical times. Learn more about the importance of hand hygiene access and knowledge in healthcare settings at www.globalhandwashing.org