



President Speech for 27th May 2023. World EM Day

My fellow emergency medical professionals working in the African continent. As the President of the African Federation for Emergency Medicine, I am happy to support the World Emergency Medicine Day dedicated to safety. It is a matter of utmost importance for us to ensure that our colleagues have a safe and secure environment to work in, and our patients receive the care they need without facing any risks.

The Emergency Medicine Day campaign on safety is a call for all emergency medical professionals and patients across the African region to unite and demand better working conditions. We know that our patients need our care, attention, and relief from pain and disease, but our emergency medical personnel also require the right working conditions to provide the necessary care.

The African region has faced many increasing challenges in the past decade include communicable diseases such as COVID-19, ebola, malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and cholera, an increase in non-communicable diseases due to factors such as urbanization, changes in diet, and aging populations, maternal and child health issues, road traffic collisions and natural disasters, as well as conflict and displacement, all significantly impacting the health of the population and testing the limits of our emergency care provision.

Our emergency medical professionals including doctors, nurses, and paramedics have demonstrated exceptional skills in managing these disasters and conditions, but we are not immune to these issues. We cannot ignore the fact that the working conditions for our emergency medical personnel have not improved and sometimes we face potential exposure to violence and trauma within our places of work. This has greatly affected staff morale, mental health and retention as we continue to face daily challenges.

The risk of burnout among our colleagues is high, which is why we must continue to raise our voices and demand more safety for all. It is a matter of urgency that we all come together as one voice to demand more safety in the emergency health care system. As the African Federation for Emergency Medicine, we urge all emergency medical professionals, stakeholder, media houses, sister organizations, policy makers, the general public and especially our patients across all countries to join us in this campaign.

We want to hear from you. We want to know how your workplace and environment feel to you. Do you feel safe and protected? Are you respected as a person? We also want to hear from our patients. Do you feel safe when you need to go to the emergency department. By sharing your experiences, you can help us understand the challenges that you face. We also encourage you to share your good experiences as we can learn from these and work together in solving these challenges.

There are several factors that can contribute to unsafe care in the emergency unit. These can include:

1. Staffing shortages: When there are not enough staff members to manage the patient load, which can lead to fatigue and burnout and increase the risk of medical errors.
2. Inadequate training and support: Emergency medical personnel need ongoing training and support to keep up with the latest advances in emergency medicine. Without this, they may be ill-equipped to handle complex cases or make informed decisions.
3. Inadequate resources: Emergency units need to have access to the necessary resources, including equipment, medications, and supplies, to provide high-quality care. Without these resources, emergency medical personnel may not be able to provide the level of care that patients need.

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4. Communication breakdowns: Communication breakdowns between different healthcare providers can lead to errors in patient care. This can happen when there is a lack of clear communication between physicians, nurses, and other staff members.
5. High patient volumes: Emergency units can become overcrowded, leading to delays in care and increased stress for both patients and staff members. This can also contribute to the risk of medical errors.
6. Systemic issues: Sometimes, unsafe care in the emergency unit can be the result of systemic issues in the healthcare system. These can include inadequate funding for emergency medical services or a lack of access to healthcare services for underserved populations.

It is important to recognize that these factors can interact in complex ways to create unsafe conditions in the emergency unit potentially resulting in poor care affecting both patients and staff.

The African Federation for Emergency Medicine is committed to advocating for a safer and more secure environment for our emergency medical personnel and patients. We are working tirelessly to advocate for better working conditions, increased training, and improved access to resources. We know that these steps will lead to better outcomes for our patients and our colleagues. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that involves improving staffing levels, providing ongoing training and support, ensuring adequate resources are available, promoting effective communication, managing patient volumes, and addressing systemic issues within the healthcare system. By working together to address these factors, we can help to create a safer and more effective emergency medical system that provides the high-quality care that patients deserve.

It is crucial that we come together and demand more safety in the emergency health care system. The 27th of May is a day to raise our voices and make our demands heard. We must continue to work together to ensure that our emergency medical personnel have the right working conditions to continue to provide excellent care to our patients. By advocating for more safety in the emergency medical system, we can help improve the lives of our patients and our colleagues and ensure a safer future for all.

We cannot do this alone, but we can do this together

Thank you.

Statement supported by



Bonney

Dr Joseph Bonney

President – African Federation for Emergency Medicine

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