

Smart Injection Programme

Aim: to stop disease being spread through medical injections

Why the Smart Injection Programme?

Medical injections should save lives. They are administered to protect people from disease, or cure them from infections. But unsafe injections, using dirty or unsterile syringes or needles for example, can end lives. They pass diseases like HIV and Hepatitis from one patient to another, to health workers, and waste collectors. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), unsafe injections lead to 1.3 million deaths and \$540 million in financial costs every year. One child dies every 24 seconds from an unsafe injection.

This tragic and unnecessary burden is preventable and can be eradicated. Syringes are reused for a number of reasons: there may be insufficient product supply; some healthcare workers do not understand the risks that reuse poses; or it is perceived as 'cheaper' to reuse or recycle devices, even if they only cost a few cents.

Injection safety projects are not new. GAVI's work in immunisation and PEPFAR's in therapeutic care have produced some very successful programmes, covering around 6% of all injections given. But for injection safety to be effective, it must be universal. The Smart Injection Programme is an innovative proposal that builds on existing successful initiatives and allows countries to implement a comprehensive, holistic injection safety programme to cover all types of injections. The challenge is to bring sustainable safe injection practices to the whole healthcare system.

What is the Smart Injection Programme?

Smart proposes co-funding by countries and donors to bridge the financial and information gap between unsafe and safe injections. It addresses the different reasons for reuse through four key components:

1. Full quantities of safety syringes - enough for every injection given in the country. To protect people effectively, injection safety cannot discriminate between types of injection or drug. Safety syringes are designed to prevent reuse and protect the patient, the healthcare worker, and the environment from harm. To be eligible for co-funding, safety syringes must be able to show conformity with accepted international quality standards. The Smart Programme is product-independent.
2. Waste management planning and resources. WHO suggests that currently syringes are reused on average seven times in developing countries. Using one syringe for one injection will clearly increase the amount of waste and the need for sharps protection is clear. Waste disposal is already a problem in many countries, so this must be addressed with quick and comprehensive action.
3. Training for healthcare workers on injection safety. To promote the rational use of injections, and to allow healthcare workers to carry out their duties in safety to themselves, the patient, their co-workers and the environment.
4. Public information on injection safety. Patients have a right to know about injection safety: why injections can be dangerous, and how to receive a safe one. Today many are not aware of the risks.

Co-funding to cover these four complimentary, essential components, is around 5 US\$ cents per injection. Using Kenya as an example, with 32 million people, and 4 injections per person per year, this amounts to \$6.4 million required in co-funding per year. This is equivalent to the treatment costs for less than 1% of the HIV sufferers in the country. To cover the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa would require approximately \$129 million a year. Funding requirements are likely to fall over time as market prices of safety syringes and standard syringes converge, and raised public awareness reduces training and education costs.

How will it work and when?

The Smart Programme aims to bring together all the key stakeholders needed to achieve comprehensive and sustainable injection safety. These include national ministries of health representing the patients; local populations; medical and nursing bodies representing the healthcare providers; the donor agencies; and the suppliers of goods and services. The Programme will be piloted in a small number of key countries prior to a broader roll out. Kenya and Uganda are excellent pilot candidates given their commitment to developing injection safety to date and their success in addressing HIV prevalence rates.

The 2007 East Central and South African (ECSA) Health Ministers' meeting in Arusha, Tanzania was the forum where the Smart Programme was launched and brought to a wider audience. The result is a ground-breaking resolution on injection safety approved by all member states. Implementation is now underway with a follow up technical meeting completed in October 2007 and a further progress update due in Q1 2008.

Join us to succeed.

Sustainable safe injections are a realistic and essential goal. We invite participation from all stakeholders to help achieve this, and make every injection safe, effective, and affordable. The lives of over 3000 people can be saved, every day.