



**PRESS RELEASE – Embargoed until 10pm 14<sup>th</sup> January 2009**

## **PATIENTS WELCOME SURGERY CHECKLIST TO SAVE LIVES**

Action against Medical Accidents ('AvMA') - the patients charity which promotes patient safety and justice for injured patients - welcomes the Safer Surgery Saves Lives initiative being launched by the World Health Organisation for the European region in London on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009. Speaking at the conference to launch the initiative which includes a checklist to help avoid errors in surgery, AvMA's chief executive Peter Walsh will give examples of the human cost of perfectly avoidable errors such as operating on the wrong patient, or on the wrong organ or side of the body. He will call for use of the checklist to be made compulsory. Research conducted by the World Health Organisation shows that use of the checklist would save lives and avoid many unnecessary injuries to patients. Mr Walsh said:

"This is not rocket science. Most people assume that the kind of routine safety procedures conducted before airline pilots take off would happen before surgery is conducted upon them. It breaks our hearts to explain to people who contact us after these kinds of events that this is not necessarily the case, and that individual hospitals and even individual surgeons can choose not to go that extra yard to improve safety. It is bad enough when things go wrong because of very complex issues or a string of co-incidental system errors. It is even more tragic if you know that the error would have been avoided by use of this very simple tool. We need a consistent approach to this and to make it happen this initiative must be given teeth and not become just another piece of suggested good practice about which health providers can pick and choose."

**ENDS**

- Peter Walsh, AvMA's chief executive, is a keynote speaker at the European Launch of the World Health Organisation 'Safer Surgery Saves Lives' initiative at the British Library, London on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009.
- AvMA is a registered charity (number 299123). Registered office: 44 High St, Croydon, CR0 1YB.
- AvMA's campaigning is informed by its Helpline and casework service for injured patients and their families which deals with around 4,000 enquiries each year. Case studies are available.  
For further details see [www.avma.org.uk](http://www.avma.org.uk)