Everyone needs health services at some point in their lives, and they expect the care and medicines they receive to be quality and safe. This requires effective regulation.

From the time a new medicine becomes available to when it is withdrawn from the market, and from the time a newly qualified health worker begins practicing to the end of their career, there needs to be continuous monitoring and management of non-compliance. Medicines that aren’t safe must be withdrawn, and health workers who are not competent must be stopped from treating patients—no matter where they are. Some countries find it challenging to implement all of the necessary regulatory functions in relation to medicines and the health workforce according to international best practices.

The rapid introduction of new treatments, technologies and services, as well as increasing demand for health services necessitates the continuous improvement of national regulatory systems and adds pressure to countries that are already finding it challenging to regulate medicines and the health workforce.

Countries can take a stepwise approach to build and strengthen their regulatory systems. Convergence and cooperation between regulatory authorities and countries can also support standard setting, sharing of best practices, information exchange and the development of legal frameworks. Regulatory convergence refers to the way in which regulatory regimes across countries or regions become similar, aligned or compatible to achieve a common outcome. It encompasses a wide range of mechanisms from legally binding instruments to informal information exchange.

Convergence and cooperation allow countries to collectively address shared concerns including public health emergencies, substandard and falsified medicines, and antimicrobial resistance.

The growing demand for and supply of medicines and health workers will continue in the Western Pacific Region, and regulatory systems will become increasingly interdependent to meet local as well as regional needs.

Regulatory strengthening for medicines and the health workforce is a priority for countries in the Western Pacific Region, and convergence and cooperation offer an opportunity to build and share best regulatory practices. WHO will support countries at regional and national levels to realize the potential that strengthened efforts and collaboration hold for the future.

WHO is supporting countries to strengthen national laws and policies by raising awareness of the importance of effective regulatory systems, engaging in policy dialogue to support regulatory reform, and providing technical support to build institutional capacity and improve performance of regulatory functions based on particular country contexts.

WHO also plays a significant role in supporting global, regional and sub-regional networks of national regulatory authorities. These networks can facilitate the dissemination of information, best practices and experiences, assist in the development of appropriate regulatory standards and guidelines, and advocate for initiatives that strengthen regulatory systems in less-resourced countries.