

An Assessment of the Medical Waste Management System at a Healthcare Facility

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Healthcare facilities are among the complex institutions that generate a broad range of hazardous waste, medical infectious waste, during the course of healthcare activities. The medical infectious waste generated are of great importance due to its potential environmental hazards and public health risks. As such, it is imperative that healthcare facilities employ an appropriate system of medical waste management to eliminate the threat of these hazards and risks. Hazardous waste is a small portion of healthcare waste, but the absence of appropriate waste segregation practices often causes hazardous waste to contaminate general (non-hazardous) waste through a process called cross contamination; which results in the entire bulk of waste becoming potentially hazardous. A cross sectional study was employed using questionnaires, interviews, and an observational checklist, to verify whether the current method of waste management at a selected healthcare facility adhered to guidelines provided by the Guyana Environmental Protection Agency. Data were analysed through frequencies and descriptive analyses, then compared with the standard. The results revealed that the current waste management practices at the healthcare facility were unsatisfactory. Healthcare workers displayed limited adherence to standards in the handling of medical waste. These results were due to factors such as limited resources, low levels of training and knowledge, negligence, and poor waste segregation practices. Periodic training, development of a healthcare waste management plan, and audits are recommended to ensure proper handling of medical waste from point of origin to disposal.

Keywords: Medical infectious waste; cross contamination; environmental hazards; health risks