Abstract No: 553   ***Health and Hygiene***

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICES ON BIOMEDICAL WASTE MANAGEMENT AMONG HEALTHCARE WORKERS AT A TERTIARY CARE TEACHING HOSPITAL IN SRI LANKA

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With the increasing population, government hospitals in Sri Lanka face the problem of generating enormous amounts of Bio-Medical Waste (BMW). However, no studies have been conducted to evaluate the magnitude of this problem. BMW is the waste generated in all the patient management and immunization procedures, contaminated with body fluids, therefore is regarded as hazardous due to its composition and ability to transmit disease, especially HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B and C. This study is endeavoured to address the knowledge and practices of five categories of Health Care Workers, who are profoundly involved in BMW management. It was aimed to describe knowledge and practices on BMW management among health care workers at a tertiary care teaching hospital in Sri Lanka through a descriptive cross sectional study. A semi-structured questionnaire and an observation checklist were used to collect the data from the verbally consented participants who were previously acknowledged of the study through an information sheet. A total sample of 325 Health Care Workers and 30 randomly selected wards/labs/sections in the selected government hospital was assessed for this purpose from August-November 2012. The study sample was comprised of 81 doctors, 115 of nursing staff, 22 Medical Laboratory Technologists, 21 attendants and 86 of sanitation staff. SPSS for windows was used for data entry and calculating percentages, means, chi squares and t-tests in statistical analysis. The results revealed a statistically significant difference among job categories regarding the knowledge on BMW management ($p<0.001$) & practices ($p<0.001$). The 5 job categories, doctors, nursing staff, Medical Laboratory Technologists, attendants and sanitation staff, respectively had 58.7, 66.9, 65.1, 78.2, 68.9 mean scores for knowledge and 62.0, 68.5, 65.7, 77.0, 76.2 mean scores for practices, out of 100. Also, a statistically significant relationship ($p<0.01$) between the practices and knowledge was found. The association between attendance to training programmes on BMW management and its knowledge ($p< 0.001$) & practices ($p< 0.01$) was also discovered to be statistically significant. Attendance to training programmes by Doctors, nursing staff, Medical Laboratory Technologists, attendants and sanitation staff, respectively 14.8%, 53.9%, 42.9%, 72.9%, and 59.3% clearly shows this correlation with their knowledge & practices. Deficiencies in facilities for BMW management were observed in the hospital. As the final conclusion, it proved that increasing knowledge regarding BMW management can positively affect its practices. There was a wide variation regarding BMW management knowledge and practices among the subjected job categories. It was evident that attention of the responsible parties is vital in improving the knowledge and practices on BMW management. Lack of facilities for BMW management was leading to poor practices.