

Acknowledgements

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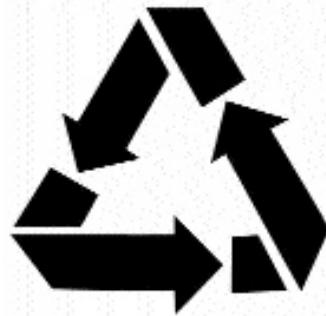
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SYMBOLS



Biohazardous waste



Recycle waste



Do not litter

These are common symbols that are used in health care waste management. You can copy these symbols and use them in your health care facility .

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoP	Code of Practice
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HCGW	Health Care General Waste
HCRW	Health Care Risk Waste
HCWM	Health Care Waste Management
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation

BACKGROUND TO HEALTH CARE WASTE MANAGEMENT AND THIS BOOKLET

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for anyone who works with health care waste in a health facility such as a hospital or clinic in Gauteng Province. It is for you, if you are a health care waste officer, an assistant health care waste officer, an infection control nurse, an environmental health practitioner, an occupational health and safety officer, a health promoter, a senior staff member in the cleaning department or if you work in nursing management.



What is this booklet about?

This booklet deals with the question of how to promote awareness of the correct disposal of health care waste in your health facility, occupational health and safety issues as well as care of the environment and recycling. It describes how to organise fun educational or awareness activities in health care facilities to encourage all staff to address these three areas according to the regulations.

Why is this booklet important?

Everyone who lives in South Africa has the right to live and work in an environment that is not harmful to their health and well being. This right is written into our national constitution. Environmental and other related legislation in South Africa aims to ensure that this right can be achieved.



In Gauteng Province there are new regulations for the management and disposal of health care waste. All staff in health facilities who generate, throw out or transport health care waste are legally responsible for disposing of it according to the regulations. The regulations set the standards for health care waste management. Failure to follow the regulations can create a health and safety risk to staff in health facilities, staff at waste disposal sites, as well as the general public. It is not enough for staff to read the regulations. Staff need to know the regulations and put them into practice. This booklet aims to provide some tools to build awareness, skills and positive attitudes towards health care waste management in your health care facility.



If you wish to become more familiar with the regulations, you should read The Gauteng Health Care Waste Management Regulations and The Waste Information Regulations which can be found on the Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Land Affairs (DACEL) website at <http://www.dacel.gpg.gov.za> and at <http://www.csir.co.za/ciwm/hcrw>

You should also read the Gauteng Department of Health Code of Practice for Health Care Waste Management. This booklet describes correct health care waste management practices in a health care facility. Copies are available from the Gauteng Department of Health and the Gauteng Sustainable Health Care Waste Management Project at the website address above. Each health care facility should have its own copy that is made available to all levels of health care facility management.

What information can I find in this booklet?

This booklet provides the following information:

- ◆ A definition of health care waste management
- ◆ A description of the components of an awareness activity
- ◆ A list of important messages that can be communicated using awareness activities
- ◆ Sixteen examples of awareness activities that can be used in your health facility.

How do I use this booklet?

This booklet is a reference book. You should keep it easily available in your workplace and refer to it when you need to organise an awareness activity for health care waste management.

Something to THINK about

The Gauteng Department of Health requires the service provider for health care risk waste to organise awareness activities in collaboration with health care facilities from 2004. This means that all health care facilities will have the opportunity to participate in awareness activities even if there is a shortage of resources such as at a clinic or in a more rural area.

INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH CARE WASTE MANAGEMENT

What is health care waste management?

Health care waste management deals with the safe management of waste produced in health care facilities. All waste produced in a health care facility is said to travel on a journey referred to as the “cradle to grave” journey. The cradle is the beginning point at which the waste is made or generated. An example of this is a bloody swab that gets generated in casualty. The grave is where the waste is finally disposed of. In this example, the bloody swab gets burnt in an off-site incinerator and the ashes are disposed of on a controlled landfill.

What is health care waste?

Health care waste includes all the waste generated within a health care facility. There are two broad categories of waste that are generated and these are:

Health care general waste (HCGW)

which includes papers, packaging, left over foods and flowers. It is similar to your domestic waste at home.

Health care risk waste (HCRW)

refers to all waste that can be considered dangerous or hazardous to either human health or the environment.



What is health care risk waste?

Health care risk waste is separated into nine waste streams or categories. Each stream describes specific types of waste, some of which are identified here:

- ◆ **Infectious waste** – used dressings and swabs, blood bags, soiled linen savers
- ◆ **Sharps** – hypodermic needles, scalpels, infusion sets and blades
- ◆ **Anatomical waste** – organs, placentas, body fluids, human foetuses
- ◆ **Hazardous chemical waste** – flammable solvents, other chemicals used for cleaning
- ◆ **Genotoxic/cytotoxic waste** – outdated drugs, radioactive material used in cancer treatment
- ◆ **Pharmaceutical waste** – drugs, vaccines (unused, expired, spilled)
- ◆ **Radioactive waste**
- ◆ **Pressurised containers**
- ◆ **Waste with high content of heavy metals** – mercury waste (thermometers, blood pressure meters, special batteries)



Each of these health care risk waste streams produces different safety, health and environment hazards. For example, did you know that the incorrect disposal of infectious wastes, such as bloody linen savers, can result in the transmission of infections to people?

The incorrect disposal of sharps, which may carry traces of contaminated blood, can cause cuts and puncture wounds. Many health workers are anxious about needle stick injuries because of the risk of getting an infection such as HIV. It is therefore important that health care waste be separated and disposed of according to its category. For example, sharps must be placed into a rigid, puncture-proof container. All HCRW is taken to a treatment facility for disposal. HCRW is often burnt (incinerated). HCRW must not go to a municipal landfill site.



Sharps must be placed in a rigid, puncture-proof container

What does it mean to separate health care waste?

Health care waste management emphasises the correct separation or segregation of waste at the point where it is generated. Segregation of waste relies on you and your colleagues correctly identifying waste according to its category. You should be aware of the correct type of container to use and how the waste should be transported and stored in your health facility. Correct segregation in your health facility will ensure that the correct disposal of waste, either at a landfill site (for HCGW) or treatment facility (for HCRW), occurs.



Waste should be correctly segregated and correctly transported in a health care facility

Something to THINK about

1. Can you think of the possible hazards resulting from the incorrect disposal of large amounts of infectious waste on to municipal landfill sites?
2. Which people might get exposed to these hazards if HCRW goes to a municipal landfill site?

AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

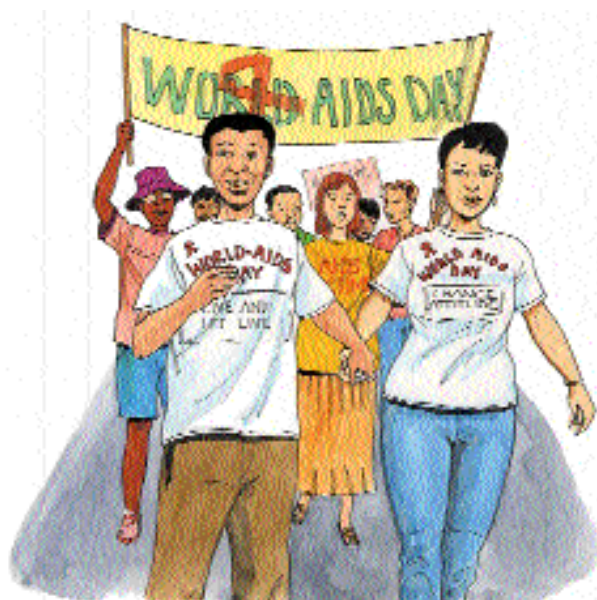
What is an awareness activity?

Awareness activities are fun educational activities that are used to communicate important information or are used to motivate people to take action. Awareness activities are usually once-off activities that happen on one day or over one week. Awareness activities rarely last longer than one week.

Awareness activities are not the same as training or education programmes. Awareness activities aim to communicate one or two important “messages” or pieces of important information only. Training and education programmes communicate more complex information.

Many people are familiar with awareness days such as “World AIDS Day.” Each year, December 1 is World AIDS Day. The World Health Organisation provides a different theme for this day each year with the purpose of celebrating progress made in the struggle against the epidemic and to highlight the challenges. For the period 2002 - 2003, the theme was “Live and let live” which focused on eliminating the stigma and discrimination facing infected and affected people.

However, awareness days such as World AIDS Day are only successful if they are supported by education and training programmes, such as school and workplace programmes, that provide people with the basic facts about the subject. Education programmes rely on much greater involvement of a facilitator or educator who communicates more detailed information. Your HCRW service provider provides ongoing training in health care waste management.



Common awareness activities

There are no rules about awareness activities although useful guidelines are provided in this booklet. You will find over time that the more unusual and fun your awareness activity, the more likely it is to succeed.

Many people think that awareness activities must involve posters and pamphlets. This is not true. It is often expensive to produce posters and pamphlets. Also they are not always very effective because people often don't read them. Can you think of the last time you read one of the posters on the wall at your health care facility? Posters quickly become part of the furniture and lose their impact unless they are changed regularly. Likewise, many people do not read pamphlets. Pamphlets often are found dropped on the floor and create a litter problem! Making a banner/s, designing and printing T-shirts or stickers and badges is easier and a better use of small media.

READ
pages 12 and 13 of
this booklet for more
advice about how to design
small media for
awareness activities