



Report on Training Video on Cleanup and Temporary Storage of Mercury Waste for Health Care Facilities.

Background

There is limited awareness in health care workers about the health risks posed by exposure to mercury. However, mercury is present in a variety of products used in healthcare practices, such as sphygmomanometers, patient-care thermometers, dental amalgams and laboratory chemicals, among others. Mercury products and devices in a hospital setting can also affect the downstream environment, when ending up in aquatic systems and the atmosphere through improper disposal. Currently, there are safe and cost-effective non-mercury alternatives available for all uses of mercury in health care.

Over the last years the health care sector globally, began phasing-out medical devices containing mercury. However, in many developing countries, safe management of medical mercury waste is not done properly, due to the lack of information and adequate methods of storage, treatment and final disposal of those wastes.

While mercury-based medical devices are being replaced, there's a need to train health care staff to be able to deal with mercury spills in a way that is both protective to them and the environment. Training on safe storage and management of mercury waste is necessary as well.

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) has gained broad experience over the past several years working with hospitals on mercury substitution and the management of mercury waste. HCWH has also prepared several training materials on mercury elimination and management in the health care sector.

Project Objective

The project objective was to develop a training video to provide guidance on the cleanup and temporary storage of mercury waste to healthcare facilities.

Activities and Output

Health Care Without Harm developed a script for the video based on the UNDP GEF Global Health Care Waste Project “Guidance Document on the Cleanup, Temporary or Intermediate Storage, and Transport of Mercury Waste from Healthcare Facilities”. The video provides recommendations on practical steps to cleanup small mercury spills, and the need for safe temporary on-site storage.

The script was also prepared based on HCWH expertise on the field and work with hospitals in developing countries. Peer review among relevant technical people was performed before the final version was produced and edited.

The video includes narrated parts, accompanied by graphic images to facilitate understanding of the issues explained. The video in both Spanish and English could be watched at:

In English:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l4JNZrb1U8s>

In Spanish:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptpGH4OXTvc>

The video was produced in Spanish and English, targeted for health care workers, and will be disseminated and used in developing countries. It was created so that it is adaptable in other languages.

It will be disseminated among HCWH network of hospitals, workers, NGOs and professional associations. It is currently available in both Spanish and English in HCWH web and social network sites.

Conclusions

This video is meant to be part of training programmes aiming to eliminate mercury and safely manage and storage its waste while final disposal options are given to hospitals around the world. Adequate interim measures can be easily taken into account if the workers and managers of hospitals are well informed and trained.

While this video offers tools to give proper conditions to the amounts of mercury being managed and stored temporarily in hospitals, it is of utmost important to devote resources and energy to replace mercury waste sources in health care facilities in the first place and to provide final safe disposal options for the wastes.

For more information:

Health Care Without Harm Latin America

Info@saludsindanio.org

Tamborini 2838

1425 Buenos Aires

Argentina