

About Health Care Waste Management Cell, Department of Community Medicine, MSRMC

Health Care Waste Management Cell was started with the objective of addressing the public health issues and concerns about Safe and Sound Health care Waste Management Systems.. The modest beginnings could be traced back to the efforts of creating awareness during a workshop on hospital wastes in December 1995 which culminated in undertaking the assessment of waste management practices across 64 health care settings in the city of Bangalore. The key findings were lack of awareness, lack of information support, lack of practices and lack of co-ordination. This exploratory study was undertaken with support from Department of Ecology, Environment and Forests, Government of Karnataka and as an advocacy issue was shared at several forums including the Standing Committee on Health of the Karnataka Legislature and accepted by the Government (1997-98).

Realising the felt need for a working manual on safe management of Health care waste, the “Information and learning units for safe management of health care waste” was drafted and extensively field-tested. This activity was supported by the department of Environment, Ecology and Forests. The manual which is currently in its third re-print is being translated into 5 languages has found wide acceptance across the country. Another major activity of the HCWMCell was anchoring the Malleshwarm Health Care waste management project, a multi-partner endeavour involving governmental, non-governmental and private organizations: financially supported by the The Waste, Netherlands under SWABHIMANA – the Citizen-government initiative of the Bangalore city Corporation. This was a practical problem solving endeavour undertaken in a defined locality in Bangalore city and the entire process for first time looked at several operational and realistic issues on proper health care waste management practices both within and outside health care institutions. It had a greater influence in shaping policies at State and National levels.

Recognising the need for Capacity building, Systems development and advocacy for health care waste the HCWM Cell has taken up several initiatives. It has been the founder members of the Indian Society of Hospital waste management and since inception has undertaken the editorial responsibility of bringing out the Journal of the society. The inaugural conference of the society held at Bangalore in 2001 showcased the public health aspects of safe management of health care waste and the Biannual conference held in 2004 looked at Occupational safety issues in greater detail.

HCWM Cell has been recognized as the Regional Training center for sound management of Health care waste by the World Health Organization in the South East Asia Region. The Cell hosted the Workshop to develop Policy on Health care waste for the South East Asia Region. Adding voice to the efforts of Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi it has contributed to the development of Resource materials for the Certificate Course in Hospital waste management and is also a study centre.

A key strength of the HCWMCell is its network partners both locally, nationally and internationally. In partnership with World Health organization, Waste Netherlands. Waste Wise, India, Indian Medical Association (Karnataka State Branch and other branches in different states of India) and several other governmental (State Pollution Control Boards) and non-governmental organizations (TERI, Toxics Link, GTZ) it has been contributing to enhance systems for better management of health care waste . Members of the Cell have contributed in initiating systems for waste management in several countries including Indonesia, Srilanka, Maldives, Myanmar, Burkina faso, Phillipines, etc.,