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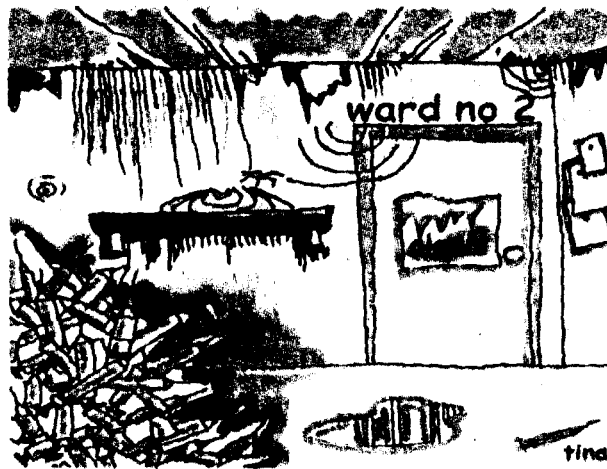
Hospital waste management a far cry

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Hospital waste management is a far cry in a majority of the hospitals in Pakistan. There are no standard procedures for waste management; no record-keeping of waste disposal and collection; and no waste management teams on medical waste disposal. Waste materials are collected by sweepers, who are not given any guidance on handling different types of waste. No protective clothing is provided to waste handlers.

In the given scenario, the holding of a 10-day training workshop on safe management of biomedical waste was a welcome development. The training, which concluded at the District Headquarters Hospital here on Monday, was organised by the National Institute of Health (NIH), in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO), and was attended by over 200 healthcare workers comprising doctors, nurses, paramedics and sanitary workers.

Speaking on the occasion, experts highlighted that the existing hospital waste management in Pakistan is such that there are



neither any Waste Management Teams, nor any standard procedures for waste management. There are no specialists on medical waste disposal in hospitals. There is no record keeping of waste disposal and collection. There is no focal person or committee that can be held responsible for efficient waste disposal. Waste materials are collected by sweepers, who are not given any guidance or training on handling different types of waste. No protective clothing is provided to the waste handlers.

The participants were in-

formed that recently, Hospital Waste Management Rules 2005 have been notified and need to be implemented in all hospitals through formation of Advisory Committees and Hospital Waste Management Teams. Healthcare waste is not being handled properly, thus posing grave risk to people and the environment. Healthcare workers, waste handlers, waste scavengers and the general public are all being exposed to health risks from infectious waste, particularly from sharps, which can cause diseases like Hepatitis B and C as

well as HIV and AIDS.

The session was informed that a study conducted by a non-governmental organization reveals that 80,000 tonnes of solid waste is produced daily in the country. The hospital waste component is just 15 to 20%, but when it is thrown or dumped with municipal waste, it contaminates the entire lot. Studies show that around 2.0kg of waste/bed/day is produced out of which 0.1-0.5% can be categorized as risk waste. There has been considerable reporting of high incidence of Hepatitis B & C in different groups of the country; the average prevalence of Hepatitis B ranges between 3-4% (6 million) and that of Hepatitis C stands at 5% (7.5 million).

Dr. Jamal Nasir, focal person for Environmental Health at NIH, highlighted the importance of management of healthcare waste. He said, NIH has an established environmental health protection unit, which has developed a policy document on sharps waste management. He called upon the participants to ensure that the policy is implemented to stop the spread of communicable diseases from hazardous waste.