Charity begins at home! Medical waste in homes, an oversight by policy-makers and policy-implementers

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Introduction

Medical waste is a by-product of health care activities generated in health care facilities such as

- Hospitals
- Clinics
- Pharmaceutical manufacturing plants
- Research laboratories and
- Nursing homes
- Ordinary homes where there is care of a patient (WHO, 2015)
The link between Medical Waste Management and homes

• Due to high HIV prevalence in South Africa

• People living with HIV/AIDS/TB/Diabetes and other chronic illnesses receive care at home

• Community-based care organisations (CBOs) provide community-based care services to patients who link them with clinics

• Community health workers are employed to offer home visits to the patients
Why was this study conducted?

• There are lots of studies conducted in health care facilities such as
  ✓ Hospitals
  ✓ Clinics
  ✓ Nursing homes

✓ But there are no studies in ordinary homes where we live in our communities

✓ We wanted to know the kind of Medical Waste generated in homes and where it goes and why
Where was the study conducted?

- This was a qualitative study

- 13 community-based organizations were approached
  - 10 where from townships
  - 2 from rural areas
  - 1 from an informal settlement
  - They served 29 communities within eThekwini municipality
Who participated in the study?

1. Policy implementers

- 85 community health workers who provided Home-based care to people living with HIV/TB and other chronic illnesses

- 13 Focus Group Discussions were conducted (1 per CBO)
- Observations were conducted
- Informal discussions with CHWs
2. Interviews with policy makers

- 9 Ward councillors

- 13 managers of community-based care organisations

- 7 Area Cleansing officers who are Durban solid waste (DSW) management officials

- 7 Education officers within DSW
What we found:
Nature of patients cared for by community health workers

BEDRIDDEN PATIENTS
• Due to opportunistic infections such as
  • Diabetes
  • BP
  • TB
  • Diarrhoea
  • Due to side effects of ARVS
• etc

BASIC NURSING ACTIVITIES
• Bed bathes
• Change and wash linen
• Clean and dress wounds
• Brush teeth
• Change diapers
• Administer insulin injections
• Others
What medical waste is generated in homes?

**WASTE GENERATED**
- Used gloves
- Swabs
- Diapers
- Bandages
- Syringes
- Needles
- Waste water
- Urine
- Vomits
- Sputum

**THE WASTE ARE CONTAMINATED WITH**
- Urine
- Fecal matter
- Blood
- Vomits
- Pus
- Sputum
- Mucus
Where does medical waste from homes go?

It is mixed with domestic waste in one house bin.

Those without house bins, leave the waste outside the yard.
Common challenges with waste management in the communities

Irregular collection of waste
There is illegal dumping of waste
There is Illegal burying and burning of waste
Some homes do not have water

Some households did not have tap water in some townships

CHWs travelled long distance to access stand pipes
WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT MW

Environmental effects
• It undermines environmental aesthetics
• It causes social contagion
• It causes water pollution
• Breeding site for rodents harmful micro organism
• It causes air pollution

Health effects
• Injuries
• Tetanus that can result into death
• Infections such as Hepatitis A, B, C, HIV, TB, diarrhea and skin infections to the CHWs and the public
• It does not improve the quality of life for the patients

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Conclusions: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

- A community model based on the assumption that, when systems work together, their function also improves.
- MW policies are inadequate.
- Households are not provided with MWM facilities.
- MWM by CHWs and households is compromised.
- The patient’s well being is compromised.
Recommendations: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

- Urie Brunfenbrenner (1970’s)
- Based on assumption that, when systems work together, their function also improves
- If MWM policies are provided by the Government
- Households are provided MWM facilities
- This will improve MWM by CHWs and households
- The patient’s well being will improve
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

• Thank you to the conference organizers for the opportunity to present

• PhD Scholarship by Health Economics HIV & AIDS Research Division (HEARD, UKZN) 2013-2015

• Doctoral dissertation fellowship award by African Population & Health Research Centre (APHRC, Kenya) 2014-2016

• NRF Postdoctoral Fellowship (the Green Fund) 2016-2018
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!