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## SUMMARY

This descriptive cross-sectional study was done among attendants, ordinary labourers and sanitary labourers in August 2003 at General Hospital Trincomalee to assess whether they have adequate knowledge, positive attitudes and good practices in handling clinical wastes. It was limited to General Hospital Trincomalee due to financial and time constraints. As the total number of the study population was 154 (60 attendants, 30 ordinary labourers and 64 sanitary labourers) they were all included in the sample.

The practices followed were studied by direct observation using a checklist during their duty hours. The knowledge and attitudes were studied using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. It was made sure that both did not overlap. Data analysis was carried out using Epi Info - Version 6 software package (CDC, Atlanta and WHO, Geneva) and SPSS package Version 10.0 for windows produced by SPSS Inc, Michigan Avenue, Chicago 60611.

Although the overall knowledge of the respondents was poor, The Knowledge on ways to dispose waste was adequate.

There was a statistically significant difference ( $P < 0.001$ ) between the study groups in level of education, statistically significant difference ( $P < 0.0001$ ) among the different work category and statistically significant difference ( $P < 0.01$ ) in work experience upon the knowledge on clinical waste handling.

Although the overall attitude was adequate, their attitude on handling clinical waste had statistically significant difference ( $P < 0.001$ ) in level of education, work category ( $P < 0.001$ ) and work experience in years ( $P < 0.01$ ). Attitudes perceived by the attendants who underwent a formal attendant training and the other labourers who did not have this training was not similar.

Although majority of the study group tried to use gloves during handling clinical waste, usage of other precautionary methods such as masks, apron and boots were very poor. This was attributed to the unavailability of such items. Practice of hand washing procedure was at the optimum among the study group. Getting advice after an accidental prick and using separate bins for different waste was adequate.

On the whole the study revealed that, although the overall knowledge was poor among the study population, majority of them had a positive attitude in handling of waste.

All these factors point in one direction that is, all these staff, need awareness programmes, trainings and health education regarding handling of clinical waste. Also they should be provided with ample precautionary measures and equipment by the administration and the supervision should be strengthened, to see whether they are adhering to universal precautions.