Personal Protective Equipment Use and Hazardous Drug Spills Among Ambulatory Oncology Nurses

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Purpose/Objectives: To examine patterns and organizational correlates of personal protective equipment (PPE) use and hazardous drug spills.

Design: Cross-sectional mailed survey.

Setting: Ambulatory practices in California, Georgia, and Michigan.

Sample: 252 Oncology Nursing Society members who administer hazardous drugs.

Methods: Bivariate and multivariable regression analyses.

Main Research Variables: Outcomes were PPE use and hazardous drug spills. Covariates included nursing workloads, nurses’ practice environments, and barriers to PPE use.

Findings: Twenty-six percent reported a recent drug spill, and 90% wore only one pair of chemotherapy-tested gloves. Increased PPE use was associated with increased nurse participation in practice affairs, nonprivate ownership, increased nursing workloads, and fewer barriers to PPE use. Spills were associated with significantly less favorable manager leadership and support and higher workloads.

Conclusions: Drug spills occur often in ambulatory settings. PPE use remains low, and barriers to PPE use persist. Higher workloads are associated with more drug spills.

Implications for Nursing: Managers should monitor and correct aberrant workloads and ensure that PPE is available and that staff are trained.