Risk Management of Excreta in a Cancer Unit

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Although many legal and clinical requirements are in effect for the preparation and administration of the antineoplastic drugs, limited data exist on the potential cytotoxic risk to healthcare personnel from exposure of excreta (urine, feces, expectorations, saliva, perspiration, and vomiting) from patients. A preliminary risk analysis was conducted with a multidisciplinary work group. The objectives were to identify all potential hazards and accidental events that may lead to an accident related to the excreta management and to implement a global risk reduction and quality improvement policy. The findings revealed the potential risks of excreta contamination in health service and led to recommendations for the healthcare team to optimize working conditions, ensure public protection and occupational health, and promote environmental and employee safety.

Methods

To determine the potential risks for excreta management in the hospital, a work group was formed with representatives from the pharmacy, risk management, care, occupational medicine, waste management, laundry, and hygiene departments, as well as from the cancer unit and the laboratory.

Sample and Procedures

All patients were informed of the study’s approach and personally identifiable information was kept confidential. The study was conducted for six months, from January to June 2010, and 300 patients were monitored and treated. The potential exposed persons (healthcare personnel and family members) to excreta from treated patients were identified. All contacts with excreta were recorded and the devices used to collect the excreta and associated wastes were listed. The day-to-day routines and interactions for each patient were observed and analyzed, including restroom use, room cleaning procedures, food procedures, contact with other healthcare personnel, and laundry service. When the patient used the toilet,