

Occupational Health and safety Hazards Encountered by Health Care Workers in Tanzania: The Case of Amana Regional referral Hospital, Dar es Salaam.

This study arose from interest in issues pertinent to occupational health and safety hazards associated with municipal and regional referral hospitals in Tanzania. Municipal and regional referral hospitals are key health care facilities in the country's health care system. This study analysed occupational health and safety hazards encountered by health care workers at Amana Hospital which is the municipal hospital for Ilala district in Dar es Salaam. The data for this study were acquired mainly through documentary review, interviews, questionnaire surveys, and physical surveys and investigations. Documentary review focused on internal reports on occupational health and safety aspects while interviews were conducted with selected staff of the hospital. A comprehensive questionnaire survey was conducted among health care workers, especially doctors and nurses. Physical surveys and investigations focused on hospital premises and physical facilities as well as on operations and practices. This study has revealed that characteristic of hospitals create occupational health and safety hazards mainly due to the hospital premises, the services offered, the activities undertaken, the equipment and facilities used, and operation and practices. The most dangerous activities that expose health care workers to occupational hazards are injection and intravenous transfusion plus surgical procedures. The commonest measures currently used to adder OHS hazards at Amana Hospital include use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Almost all hospital departments and units are associated with some occupational health and safety hazards and the commonest of the hazards is needle stick. Among the OHS hazards that health care workers at Amana Hospital have actually been exposed to, the commonest are blood splash, needle stick and cut injuries. Medical waste management at Amana Hospital has two major deficiencies. First the collection frequency is too low, leading to overflowing of the waste. Second, infectious and non infectious fractions of medical wastes are mixed instead of being handled separately, which amplifies health, safety and environmental risks. It can be concluded from this study that health care work is associated with many occupational health and safety hazards which can result in infections. Therefore, there is a great need for improved OHS management in the hospitals.

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