

Abstract

Healthcare waste management (HCWM) is an important aspect of healthcare delivery globally because of its hazardous and infectious components that have potential for adverse health and environmental impacts. The paper introduces a set of indicators for assessing HCWM systems in hospitals. These indicators are: HCWM policies and standard operating procedures, management and oversight, logistics and budget support, training and occupational health and safety, and treatment, disposal and waste treatment equipment housing. By plotting a mark on a continuum which is defined as good and poor on the extremes and is connected with all other marks in a spoke arrangement, it's possible to describe a baseline for HCWM in any specific hospital. This baseline can be used to improve awareness of the actors and policy-makers, compare the same hospital at a different point in time, to compare observations by different evaluators and to track improvements. Results suggest that in Kenya, the application of such indicators is useful for evaluating which priorities should be addressed to improve outcomes in HCWM systems. Systematic sampling technique was used to identify and collect data by use of observational checklist, interviews, visual verification and review of documents and a HCWM assessment tool. The objective is to suggest an integrated management tool as a method to identify prevailing problems with a HCWM system. The method can be replicated in other contexts worldwide, with a focus on the developing world. The integrated indicators focus on management of HCW and not its potential impact on human health and environment, an area recognized to be critical for future research.