

Phasing – out Mercury Containing Devices St. Paul Hospital, Tuguegarao

GGHH Agenda Goals

- Chemicals

Hospital Goal

- Replace all mercury containing medical devices such as thermometers, sphygmomanometers and light bulbs with non- toxic/non-hazardous devices.

Progress Achieved

The St. Paul Hospital in Tuguegarao was able to completely phase out and replace all mercury containing sphygmomanometers and thermometers. They conducted phasing out mercury containing equipment from 2007-2010.

The table below presents the information in substitution of non-mercurial thermometer and sphygmomanometer.

Device	Number of Purchased Non-Mercurial Devices
Blood Pressure Apparatus	36 as of 2018
Thermometers	1,000 every month

Issue

In 2006, St. Paul Hospital Tuguegarao attended Southeast Asia Conference tackling Mercury containing medical devices and its harmful effects sponsored by Health Care Without Harm – Asia. The discussion was very helpful for the institution to learn about issue and opportunities, which prompted the top management to take action on environment and safety. After learning the risks posed by mercurial devices during usage, breakage, storage and disposal, the hospital decided to gradually phase out and eventually replace all of these devices.

In August of 2008, the Department of Health issued an Administrative Order (DOH-AO no. 21) requiring all hospitals to gradually phase out mercury devices in 2010. The Administrative Order further supported the mercury devices phase out initiated by the hospital in 2006.

Sustainability Strategy Implemented

After the hospital's participation in the Southeast Asia Conference and Regional Conference for Public and Private Hospitals, Clinics, and other establishments conducted by Health Care

Without Harm (HCWH), the top management formed a team focused on this issue. The team’s task was to disseminate information the potential risks and hazards of mercury for health care workers and the environment. Evert department and section of the hospital received an orientation on the hazards and risks of mercury containing devices and equipment. The Management also informed St. Paul University Philippines (SPUP)-Tuguegarao, an SPC owned school, about the risks and hazards of mercury-containing devices. Later, the SPUP management followed the hospital’s recommendation to eliminate mercury containing devices.

The institution trains all employees, patients and on the use of non-mercury devices and the importance of adhering to the set policy. Mrs. Richael Batang, Pollution Control Officer and Ms. Amira Calata, Infection Control Nurse led these efforts. The employees, nurses and student nurses were not allowed to bring mercurial thermometers and sphygmomanometer inside the hospital premises to uphold and promote policy, during the transition (2007-2010). As part of implementing the policy, mercury containing devices were gradually phased – out from the hospital. Even the hospitals admission kits which usually contained mercury containing thermometer were changed to digital thermometers.

The procurement officer monitored procurement of thermometers and sphygmomanometers were and required the approval of the hospital administrator to ensure that mercury containing devices were purchased.



all

not

The administration instructed the management team to include in the procurement checklist “mercury- as part of devices’ requirement prior to procurement.

device free”

All collected mercurial devices were properly sealed and placed in a separate well-ventilated storage area to ensure safety from breakage and improper use/disposal.



Once top management decided that this was a key issue for the institution, the team identified a process for phasing out the mercurial devices:

- Consultation with identified employees (nurses, personnel in contact/using mercurial devices, purchasing officers, supply officers, healthcare waste management and occupational safety committee) and doctors regarding the phase out of mercurial devices. These orientations reiterated. promulgation of DOH – AO No. 21
- As part of the admission procedure, all patients taken in received orientation to the new policy and usage of non-mercurial devices.
- Identification of gradual phase – out of alternative non-mercurial devices. The team decided on key factors for procurement of new products: reliability, user friendliness, client and environmental safety, accessibility of suppliers, durability and affordability of the new devices.
- In 2008, the institution began procurement of quality non-mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers. This took some time to start, due to availability of the devices. Handling and maintenance of the devices were also factors affecting the implementation. For example, regular battery changes and charging of digital thermometers and sphygmomanometers
- By the end of 2008, the institution had replaced all of the mercurial devices were thanks to better alternatives on the market in terms of quality and cost.

Tracking Progress

The personnel of the hospital ensured the safe collection of the mercury containing thermometers and sphygmomanometers. Bringing in of such devices is prohibited in the hospital's vicinity.

The Procurement Officer ensures that the hospital only acquires non-mercurial devices approved by the hospital administrator. The hospital strictly imposed a rule that before procurement of supplies or equipment they have to follow compliance to specifications in the procurement checklist. In case of searching for bidders and suppliers, it is important and required that products do not contain mercury.

Hospital Waste Management Committee assures that staff properly seal and safely store all collected mercury containing until they can identify a disposal method.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

A lack of availability of quality alternatives made it difficult to begin the phase out at first. It took patience and constant identification of possible suppliers to be able to outsource non-mercurial devices that would fit the needs of the hospital.

Staff acceptance of the new technology, including clinicians such as the nurses and doctors, was particularly challenging. However, frequent training and consistent management support helped in the phasing-in of the non-mercurial devices.

The hospital stores all mercury containing devices within their premises in a separate and properly ventilated area while they explored options for proper disposal. Eventually, the hospital found an accredited transporter and treater with the Department of Environment and Natural

Resources (DENR) to collect and treat all these mercurial devices. Furthermore, the hospital also initiated to replace all the bulbs and fluorescent lights with mercurial content into light emitting diodes (LED) lights.

Demographic Information

Saint Paul Hospital- Tuguegarao, established in 1994, is a 150-bed, non-profit, secondary level private Catholic Institution owned and managed by the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres. It has 397 committed employees and 180 doctors who are competent and pledged to provide holistic quality care in a Christ-centered ministry.

The current hospital area is 18,920 sqm. The average number of in-patients catered by the institution on a monthly basis ranges from 900 to 1,200 patients. While for out-patient, an average of 700 patients are catered monthly.

The services offered by the hospital includes Emergency Room Services/Out-patient Consultations, Diagnostic Imaging Services (X-Ray, Ultrasound, Mammography and CT-Scan), Laboratory Services, Cardiovascular Diagnostic Procedures/Heart Station, Chemotherapy Services, Eye Center Facility, Dialysis Center, Rehabilitation Center, Nuclear Medicine, Respiratory Care Services and other special areas such as Endoscopy Services, Operating Room-Delivery Room Services, Intensive Care Services (for Neonates, Pediatrics and patients with medical and surgical cases).

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