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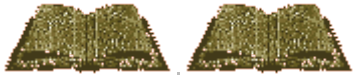 (N.B. Please increase your screen resolution to 1600 x 1200 dpi or more, for best viewing)

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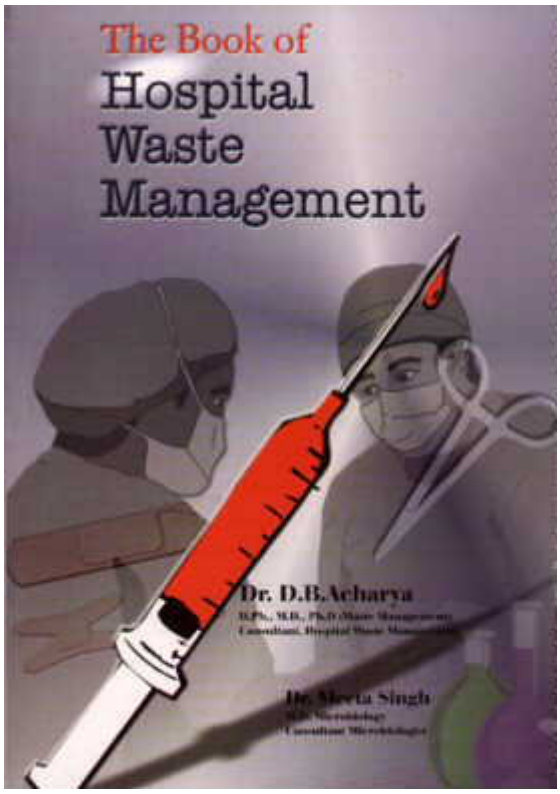
FUNDAMENTALS OF HOSPITAL WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Book of Hospital Waste Management *by* D.B.Acharya and Meeta Singh
Minerva Press, 13 Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi-110 057, India; 272 Pages: ISBN: 81-7662-095-5, Publication Date: 2000: Price India Rs. 500, UK £11.99, US $20



Till a few years back there was no scientific approach to Hospital Waste management in this country. The waste generated from hospitals was simply dumped at some place adjacent to the hospital, and left to rot. Not only was this an unpleasant sight, it encouraged mosquito breeding. Not only animals such as rats and stray dogs would frequently be found rummaging through this garbage, but also rag pickers, who would sell parts like needles and syringes to unscrupulous companies who would feed them back to the market, after simple washing! All this finally forced the Government of India to notify *Bio-Medical Waste (Management and Handling) Rules* in 1998. They were formulated in exercise of powers conferred by Sections 6,8 and 25 of the *Environment (Protection) Act, 1986*. The draft rules were gazetted on 16 October, 1997. Suggestions/comments of the public were invited within 60 days. These suggestions were considered before finalizing the rules. The rules were finally notified on 27 July, 1998, through publication in the Gazette of India.

The book under review gives a brief account of these rules, as well as some basic concepts of Bio-Medical Waste Management. The authors seem to have visited several centers in USA where advanced techniques in Bio-Medical waste management are carried out. Several of their photographs appear throughout the book, where they are seen in front of these centers.

On page 17-20, some revealing photographs are given, which indicate the real neglect our country has shown with respect to Bio-Medical Waste Management. Heaps of garbage are shown strewn outside the hospitals, with animals rummaging through it.

Authors try to tell us in this book how the biomedical waste has to be managed. Although they tend to repeat themselves at times, they seem to have conveyed their message and concern regarding biomedical waste management.

I learnt a lot about Biomedical waste management through this book, and I hope readers would likewise be benefited. There is no doubt there is lot of misinformation regarding this subject even among the doctors. The authors seem to have conducted a survey among doctors, which they reproduce on page 22. The question they asked several doctors and administrators of hospitals

was," Do you know what happens to wastes from your hospitals?" And these are the answers they got:

- No, we do not sell waste.
- We just give it to a contractor to dispose it off and he pays us some money for that.
- We do not sort out the waste and we do not know what he does with it. I think he converts it into manure.
- What special protection do they need? They are only workers who handle wastes in the hospital or outside it.

Even the doctors and administrators who knew about the rules had a "could-not-care-less" attitude. On page 69, the authors reveal the answers of some doctors who knew about the rules, but did not seem to worry about them. Some of their answers:

- There is no way to change the habits of the nurses and doctors who put things into these containers.
- Definitions are never very clear.
- I know this waste when I see it, so definitions are not really needed.
- My staff should never question what goes into this waste stream.
- Operating rooms and Emergency rooms put everything into medical waste containers. It is easier that way.
- The cost isn't that much more, and besides, I have other things to worry about.
- It is safer to just not fool with it.

But as the book tells us, this situation is not going to last forever now. The new rules have been notified by the Government of India, and anyone not sticking to these rules may be penalized. Under rule 10 (of the said rules), every in charge of a hospital which generates Bio-Medical Waste, has to submit an annual report to the prescribed authority (which has been set up in every State and Union Territory under rule 7) in a prescribed form by 31 January every year. This report would include information about the categories and quantities of Bio-Medical Wastes handled during the preceding year.

This book should prove useful most to the Hospital Administrators. But doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and students wanting to know more about this newly growing subject would also find this book useful.

Order this Book by clicking here.

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